CONVERSION AT CORINTH

An Exploration of the Understandings of Conversion Held by the Apostle Paul and the Corinthian Christians

by

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Abstract

Conversion has been a neglected topic in recent New Testament research. The thesis attempts to end this neglect through the pursuit of two inter-connected aims. They are:

(i) to clarify crucial theoretical issues surrounding the study of conversion and converts, so making more accessible to New Testament scholars the insights offered by recent studies of conversion in several different disciplines.

(ii) to explore the understandings of conversion held by Paul and the Corinthians, so contributing to our knowledge of each, and allowing the perspectives of an advocate of conversion and those who responded to his advocacy to be compared.

The structure of the thesis flows from these aims. Part 1, **Studying Conversion and Converts**, examines theoretical issues. The nature of conversion is discussed. Is conversion a universal phenomenon or a particular one? Is it essentially an individual phenomenon or a social one? It is concluded that conversion is best approached through particular understandings of it, but that there are some common features across time and across the boundaries of religious traditions. One of the most important of these common features is that conversion involves both a personally acknowledged transformation of the self and a socially recognised display of change. Alongside the need to understand conversion stands the need to understand converts. Recent studies recognise that converts are active in their own transformation, especially in the accounts which they offer of their conversion experience. Taking issue with dominant recent trends, it is concluded that although such conversion accounts develop they do not necessarily distort. The work on conversion of New Testament scholars Gaventa and Segal is briefly reviewed in the light of the preceding theoretical discussions, and some broad questions with which to approach particular understandings of conversion are defined. These concern expectations as to how conversion takes place, and expectations as to its consequences. Anthony Giddens' structuration theory is selected as an appropriate theoretical resource with which to pursue these questions.

Part 2 of the thesis explores **Paul's Understanding of Conversion** in the context of debates on his soteriology. Dominant recent interpretations minimise the significance of his conversion experience for Paul's theology, emphasise participatory categories of thought at the expense of forensic ones, and emphasise the communal and cosmic levels of Paul's thought at the expense of the individual level. In an attempt to test these emphases against Paul's understanding of conversion, chapters are devoted to Paul's use of the vocabulary of calling, his expectations in relation to the conversion of Gentiles (1 Cor. 14:20-25, 1 Cor. 6:9-11), and his expectations in relation to the conversion of Jews (Gal. 1:11-17, Phil. 3:4-12, 1 Cor. 4:1-5). The last of these chapters focuses on the only Jewish conversion about which Paul informs us in any detail, namely his own. Among

the conclusions which emerge from these chapters is that Paul's conversion experience is significant for his theology. Although he expects conversion to result in great changes in the ethical dimensions of Gentile practical consciousness and minimal changes in the same dimensions of Jewish practical consciousness, Paul's own experience of unrecognised sin provides an underlying unity. Jew and Gentile share a common plight, both of transgression and of bondage to the power of sin. To express the solution provided by Christ, Paul is creative in his use of language, blending existing categories of meaning. In particular, he allows the forensic and participatory categories of his thought to interpret each other. He also integrates the different levels of his thought, closely relating the individual and the communal dimensions of conversion. In the light of these conclusions a more balanced approach to the study of Paul's soteriology is required.

Part 3 of the thesis explores **The Corinthians' Understanding of Conversion**. As well as being shaped by Paul, the Corinthians' understanding of conversion is also influenced by Graeco-Roman culture. This influence takes various forms, and the two selected for examination are the influence of the voluntary associations and the influence of the mystery cults. Although the Corinthian church is certainly not a voluntary association, there are a range of issues in relation to which the Corinthians' attitude reflects the influence of the associations. In their approach to patronage, to conduct at the Lord's Supper, to litigation between believers and to the Jerusalem collection, the Corinthians' practical consciousness resembles that to be found in the voluntary associations. It does so to a degree which renders their conduct unsatisfactory from Paul's perspective. The influence of the mystery cults, whose presence in first century Corinth can be demonstrated as a matter of archaeological and literary record, expresses itself in the significance the Corinthians grant to baptism. Initiation into the mystery cults grant the individual a new exalted personal religious status under the patronage and protection of the deity. Prompted by the extraordinary experience of the receipt of the Spirit, the Corinthians regard baptism in a similar way (1 Cor. 12:13, 1 Cor. 2:6-16, 1 Cor. 1:10-17; 1 Cor. 15:29). Finally, conclusions are drawn as to the essential differences between the understandings of conversion held by Paul and the Corinthians, and the way pointed to further comparative studies of conversion in the first century.

Author's Declaration

I affirm that this thesis is entirely my own work and that all significant quotations have been acknowledged in the footnotes. No part of this thesis has been submitted for consideration for any degree.

Stephen J. Chester

CONTENTS

Part 3 The Corinthians' Understanding of Conversion

Abbreviations

With the exception of those listed below, all abbreviations in both text and bibliography follow the *Journal of Biblical Literature*'s 'Instructions for Contributors'.

CCCA	M.J. Vermaseren Ed., *Corpus Cultus Cybelae Attidisque* (see Bibliography).
CIG	A. Bokch et al. Eds., *Corpus Inscriptionum Graecarum* (see Bibliography).
CIL	T. Mommsen et al. Eds., *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (see Bibliography).
CIMRM	M.J. Vermaseren Ed., *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorium Religionis Mithriacae* (see Bibliography).
ID	F. Durrbach et al. Eds., *Inscriptions de Délos* (see Bibliography).
P.Lond.	'Greek Papyri in the British Museum' (for text of those cited see Nock et al., 1936)
P.Mich. Tebt	E.L. Husselman et al. Eds., 'Michigan Papyri from Tebtunis, Egypt' (see Bibliography)
SIG	W. Dittenberger Ed., *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum* (see Bibliography)
SIRIS	L. Vidman Ed., *Sylloge inscriptionum religionis Isiacae et Sarapiacae* (see Bibliography).

PART 1

STUDYING CONVERSION AND CONVERTS

1

Developing a Balanced Approach to Conversion

1.1 Understanding Conversion

"The author has not succeeded in divesting himself of pro-Jewish and pro-Christian proclivities, and the rival Hellenistic religions of redemption are accordingly represented to their disadvantage. The weighting of the scales on the Jewish-Christian side is most evident in the author's central contention that while genuine conversion was characteristic of the proselyte's adherence to Judaism and the pagan's turning to Christianity, it was not typical of the Gentile's 'adhesion' to his own cult brotherhoods ...In line with the perspective distortions already noted ...Professor Nock's own volume is lacking in that objectivity and that understanding of basic social needs and processes which are essential to significant work in the field of the history of religions."[1]

Although it was published as long ago as 1933, *Conversion* by A.D. Nock still looms large in all studies of religious change in the ancient world and, indeed, in many studies of conversion in other eras and regions. Nock's methods and conclusions may be subjected to criticism, and discussion of the subject held to have moved on, but such reservations are uttered with the respect due to a classic work of scholarship. The robust tone of the opinions quoted above therefore comes as something of a shock, especially when one realises that they are those of a contemporary reviewer, H.D. Willoughby of the University of Chicago,[2] and thus offered without the benefit of the hindsight of six and a half decades. Their content is striking, both in that their author is blind to the manifest virtues of Nock's work,[3] and in that the areas which he selects for criticism are precisely those in which Nock is today generally regarded as deficient. At once the victim and beneficiary of his own scholarly tunnel vision, Willoughby misses much, but what he does see is perceived with unusual clarity. By ignoring entirely Nock's

[1]Willoughby (1934), pp.337-38.
[2]That Willoughby came from this university is significant in terms of his criticisms of Nock, since S.J. Case of Chicago had been the pioneer of the use of sociology in New Testament study. Indeed, Willoughby specifically criticises Nock for failing to draw on Case's work.
[3]Willoughby does mention Nock's mastery of his sources and his elegant prose, but evidently considers these insignificant qualities.

argument as to the historical causes of the success of Christianity and concentrating instead on issues related to his concept of conversion,[4] Willoughby has indeed isolated the weaknesses in Nock's work. It deserves to be challenged both in relation to personal religious change within Graeco-Roman religion, and in relation to the social dimension of conversion.

1.1.1 Conversion: A Universal or Particular Phenomenon?

The first of these two areas of difficulty features strongly in the opening chapter of *Conversion*, where Nock offers a number of sharp contrasts between different categories of religious experience and behaviour. Prophetic religion is contrasted with traditional religion, faith and creed with ritual and myth, exclusive worship with supplements to ancestral piety, and moral reformation with a desire for knowledge of the secrets of the universe. Only the first of each pair of opposites can be equated with conversion. Religious change characterised by the second is not conversion but, instead, a lesser transformation which Nock terms 'adhesion'. This is because conversion involves "the taking of a new way of life in place of the old,"[5] and requires, "a consciousness that a great change is involved, that the old was wrong and the new is right."[6] In the ancient world only Judaism and Christianity satisfied these criteria since they alone "demanded renunciation and a new start,"[7] conveying the idea that religion is "all or nothing."[8] The cults of Graeco-Roman religion in general, and the mysteries in

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[4]To summarise briefly, the main component of Nock's historical argument is that the conquests of Alexander disrupted a previously stable pattern of Greek religion. By ending the independence of the city-state as a political unit, Alexander broke old ties and associations, so creating a demand for new groups. As Nock (1933), pp.99-100 puts it, "Zeus and Athena had been good protectors for the citizen of a town which was one of a number of towns living as it were in a small luminous area. But now this little world was swallowed up in the *oikoumene*, the inhabited world as known, and a vast uncertainty had come into men's lives." After several centuries of delay, Christianity provided a new world-wide religious community for the new wider world. Anyone doubting the fecundity of this argument need only consult the classic debates between Robin Horton and H. J. Fisher on conversion to Christianity and Islam in modern Africa. See Horton (1971, 1975a, 1975b) and Fisher (1973, 1985). Although he never mentions Nock, Horton attributes the success of Christianity and Islam in Africa to remarkably similar processes as those outlined above, while Fisher's rebuttals employ Nock's distinction between conversion and adhesion.

[5]Nock (1933), p.7.

[6]ibid.

[7]Nock (1933), p.14.

[8]Nock (1933), p.160.

particular, did not insist on such a decisive break with the past. "There was therefore in these rivals of Judaism and Christianity no possibility of anything which can be called conversion."[9] For Nock conversion is the preserve of certain religions and, although it is formally left unsaid, no attentive reader can fail to detect the implication that it is a mark of superiority.

While few would doubt that the contrasts drawn by Nock do capture important differences between Graeco-Roman religion and Christianity, most would now deny that these differences are an acceptable basis on which to define conversion. For example, while exclusivity of worship is undoubtedly one of the most important differences between Graeco-Roman religion and Judaism or Christianity, it is far from obvious that its corollary is a greater depth of emotional commitment and religious devotion on the part of monotheists. By making such a connection, and by building it into his definition of conversion, Nock implies a degree of emotional deficiency within Graeco-Roman religion.[10] Yet although most scholars now seek to avoid such loaded definitions of conversion,[11] there is a lack of consensus as to how this is best achieved. In his *Understanding Religious Conversion*, L.R. Rambo argues that "most studies of conversion to date have been too narrow in orientation, employing ...assumptions too deeply rooted in religious traditions."[12] Rambo therefore attempts to provide a descriptive seven stage model of the conversion process capable of application to a multitude of different varieties of conversion. "I believe that such a broad survey approach is necessary and appropriate in an increasingly pluralistic religious

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[9]Nock (1933), p.14.

[10]Nock (1933), p.138 acknowledges that the portrayal of mystery initiation in Book XI of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* acquires "the emotional values of conversion," but makes clear, both here and p.155, that this represents an abnormal level of pagan religious emotion.

[11]Although how conversion is defined continues to function as a means of making value judgements in some recent studies. See Goodman (1994) for a work in which a disinclination to seek converts implicitly functions as a mark of superiority. The value judgement is the opposite to that made by Nock, and rests on demonstrating that the character ascribed by Nock to Judaism is erroneous, but is no less strongly implied.

[12]Rambo (1993), p.4.

environment. More specialised, normative definitions of conversion are the preserve of particular spiritual communities."[13]

Yet in a work published only a year prior to that of Rambo, the same consciousness of religious pluralism led mediaeval historian Karl Morrison to opposite conclusions. "It is a confusion of categories to use the word *conversion* as though it were an instrument of critical analysis, equally appropriate to any culture or religion. The word has a profound, mystical sense in the West for which some great religions and languages of the world have no equivalent. Even in the history of the West, it has displayed different connotations at different moments. Thus, the word is more properly a subject, rather than a tool of analysis."[14] Morrison therefore offers a highly detailed exploration of the hermeneutics of conversion current within twelfth century monasticism emphasising that, even within this closely defined field, "texts on conversion display an intricate ebb and flow of several, conflicting traditions ...the doctrine of conversion set forth is not uniform. It is conspicuously made up of ill-matched ideas of conversion, which do not agree in every detail."[15] The drawing of these different ideas into an ensemble was "a virtuoso exercise in metaphorical analysis: the discernment of similarity in dissimilars."[16] Whereas Rambo concludes in the interests of inclusiveness that, for all the variety observable in its manifestations, conversion is an event or process which can occur in any time and place, Morrison finds no such continuity. Thus, the student of conversion faces a continuing dilemma: is the sort of religious bias present in Nock's work best avoided by offering a universal definition of conversion, or one which is as historically and culturally specific as possible?

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[13]Rambo (1993), pp.3-4.
[14]Morrison (1992a), p.xiv.
[15]Morrison (1992a), p.15.
[16]Morrison (1992a), p.20.

1.1.2 Conversion: An Individual or Social Phenomenon?

The second area of weakness identified by Willoughby in Nock's work, namely his neglect of the social dimension of conversion, has also become a pressing concern in recent studies of conversion. While he was acutely aware that Christianity was what, for want of neutral terminology, we must call a church, whereas Graeco-Roman religion was not, Nock seems always to think of the Christian community as a collection of individuals. His chapter on the spread of Christianity as a social phenomenon focuses entirely on how it would have appeared to the individual pagan.[17] There is little consideration of the role played by the early Christian communities in securing and sustaining the conversion of their members, of the means by which new converts were integrated into them, or of the relationship between the communal and ethical dimensions of conversion. These omissions are perhaps largely due to the fact that, as Nock acknowledges,[18] his understanding of conversion owes much to that of William James, who famously defined religion as "the feelings, acts, and experiences of individual men in their solitude, so far as they apprehend themselves to stand in relation to whatever they may consider the divine."[19] James exhibits the same relentless focus on the individual when defining conversion as "the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities."[20] As an otherwise admiring critic comments, James regarded religious communities as "highly secondary"[21] growths and this results in his giving us only a "partial view"[22] of the human religious impulse. We may feel the same about Nock and his view of conversion.

Happily, there is much evidence in recent work on conversion in the ancient world of a desire to remedy this deficiency. Having explored accounts of

[17]Nock (1933), chapter 12.
[18]Nock (1933), pp.7-9. See also endnote on p.7.
[19]James (1902), p.31.
[20]James (1902), p.189.
[21]Marty (1982), p.xxi.
[22]Marty (1982), ibid.

conversion in three ancient texts, Eugene Gallagher concludes that "each of the texts considered portrays conversion as a continuing process, which involves entering a new community, adopting specific forms of behaviour, and participating in ongoing ritual life. The texts emphasise the continuity between 'personal' and 'institutional' religious experience, rather than the discontinuity asserted by James."[23] Similarly, the work of Alan Segal on the experience of Paul as a convert draws from recent sociological studies in order to stress the important role in conversion played by the community. "Conversion resembles a new and conscious choice to socialise to a particular group - a resocialization. The convert builds up a new structure of reality, corresponding to the structure of the group joined. The values of the new group forms the convert's new reality. The degree of resocialization depends on the distance the convert must travel between the old and new communities and the strength of the new commitment."[24]

It thus seems that, even if he was weak in this area, Nock has not here bequeathed students of conversion the sort of awkward dilemma presented by the choice between universal and particular definitions of conversion. There is some degree of consensus as to how his failing should be rectified. However, opinions concerning the social dimension of conversion constantly interact with the issue of universality and particularity. In demonstrating the significant part played by communities in conversion, Gallagher discusses three stories, one drawn from each of Christianity, Judaism and Graeco-Roman religion, thereby implying that the concept of conversion can be applied equally well to all three religious traditions. In justifying his use of the modern studies of conversion from which he derived his views on the role played by communities in conversion, Segal asserts that "Paul is a convert in the modern sense of the word"[25] and that "there are some simple continuities in the phenomenon of conversion throughout

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[23]Gallagher (1993), p.14. The texts considered are the *Acts of John, Joseph and Aseneth,* and Book XI of the *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius.
[24]Segal (1990), p.74. See also pp.5-7.
[25]Segal (1990), p.6.

Western history."[26] Gallagher implies the pervasiveness of conversion across space, Segal asserts it across time.

Other particularly striking examples of such interaction can be found in recent discussions of the most significant surviving description of personal religious change within Graeco-Roman religion. The *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius describe the adventures of a wealthy young man Lucius who, through incautious fascination with sex and magic, is transformed into an ass, enduring many fabulous bawdy adventures before being changed back into human form through the agency of the goddess Isis. At this point, the comic tone of the rest of the novel gives way to a passionate and undeniably beautiful account (Book XI) of Lucius' subsequent devotion to Isis and his initiation into her mysteries. For Wayne Meeks, this is not a conversion story as there is "rather little in Apuleius' tale to support a view of initiation as a moral transformation, and nothing at all to suggest induction into the kind of community we see among the Epicureans and the Christians. Being or becoming religious in the Graeco-Roman world did not entail either moral transformation or sectarian resocialization."[27] Meeks thus supports Nock's judgement that Lucius is not a convert,[28] but does so on a somewhat different basis, emphasising precisely the connection between the moral and social dimensions of conversion neglected by Nock. Yet while this implies that, for Meeks, conversion is a phenomenon only applicable within certain religious traditions, the references which he makes to modern studies of conversion suggest essential continuity within those traditions across time.[29]

In her work on the *Metamorphoses*, far from denying that Lucius was a convert, Nancy Shumate reads the entire novel as a narrative of conversion. It represents a pattern of conversion in which "a perception of the collapse of familiar

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[26]Segal (1990), p.29.
[27]Meeks (1993), p.28.
[28]See Nock (1933), pp.138-55.
[29]See Meeks (1993), pp.21-22.

cognitive constructs precedes the convert's reconstruction of a new world and world view along religious lines. The process of conversion is a kind of shift in cognitive paradigms ...habituated structures of meaning and systems for organising reality disintegrate ...Religious discourse offers a means of restructuring the pre-convert's broken world and of re-establishing a foundation upon which to build a reliable system of knowledge."[30] The dominant concern of the comic bulk of Apuleius' novel is the disintegration of Lucius' cognitive world as he is plunged, time and again, into situations where nothing is quite as it seems, while the final Book XI relates the construction of a new cognitive world with Isis as its ordering principle. For Shumate, Lucius experiences "precisely the sort of radical cognitive reorientation that Nock claims characterised conversions to Judaism and Christianity (and possibly philosophy) exclusively. The conversion of Lucius *does* involve the adoption of a 'world-order sharply contrasted with (that) in which the neophyte had previously moved.'"[31] Yet Shumate conceives of this new world-order entirely in relation to Lucius as an individual, and the role of communities in conversion is not discussed. She suggests that Nock was justified in drawing upon James, whose work Shumate admires, but was mistaken "in stressing the moral strain in James' analysis at the expense of the epistemological or the cognitive."[32]

Thus, Shumate emphasises the individual and cognitive dimensions of conversion at the expense of social and moral dimensions and the connections between them. She and Meeks reach different conclusions on the question of Lucius' convert status, and do so on quite different grounds, defining conversion differently.[33] These

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[30]Shumate (1996), pp.14-15. It should be noted, when comparing the two, that Meeks' comments amount to no more than a few pages, whereas Shumate devotes an entire book to conversion in the *Metamorphoses*.

[31]Shumate (1996), pp.26-27, quotation from Nock (1933), p.13. Her italics.

[32]Shumate (1996), p.22 n.17.

[33]Another illustration of the centrality of the question of definition is that, conscious of the danger of deprecating the value of conversion experiences psychologically less complex than those studied by James and Nock, Hefner (1993), p.17 argues that "conversion need not reformulate one's understanding of the ultimate conditions of existence, but it always involves commitment to a new kind of moral authority and a new or reconceptualized social identity." This is clearly contrary to Shumate's understanding of conversion, who, while not arguing that all religious change involves a shift in cognitive paradigms, does argue that this sort of experience was more common in the ancient world than many have supposed. See Shumate (1996), pp.24-30. Thus, the same impulse to avoid denigrating the

different definitions, derived from different studies of conversion in the modern world,[34] interact with the issue of universal and particular definitions of conversion. By drawing on such studies both imply the existence of continuities across space and time, but they locate the boundaries of these continuities in different places. We have already seen that Meeks places them between Christianity and Graeco-Roman religion on the basis of his perception that the latter did not require the resocialization involved in conversion to the former. Ignoring such considerations, Shumate chooses instead to speak of conversion experiences and narratives as possessing generic features which are "common to a very wide, but not exhaustive, range of expressions of conversion which share a cultural foundation of dualism."[35] Operating from an avowedly post-modern perspective, and fully committed to cultural particularity, it is this underlying foundation of Platonic dualism which Shumate relies upon in order to justify the connections she asserts between conversion in the ancient and modern worlds, and between conversion in Christianity and in Graeco-Roman religion.[36] The opinions which she and Meeks express about the *Metamorphoses* thus illustrate particularly clearly the dilemmas facing anyone seeking to reach an understanding of conversion. How is one to balance the individual and social dimensions of conversion, and how is one to relate any solution to this question to the issue of the universality or particularity of conversion? The prescience of Willoughby's criticisms of Nock is once again demonstrated.

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religious capacity of ordinary people leads to opposite conclusions as to what is truly important in conversion. Does an emphasis on the conversion of the individual as a shift in cognitive paradigms implicitly devalue mass conversion, or is the truly prejudicial assumption that which holds the individuals involved in such mass movements to experience only relatively superficial change?

[34]Shumate (1996), p.34 speaks of conversion in an "admittedly Jamesian sense." Meeks (1993), p.21 n.6 and p.22 n.7 cites more recent sociological studies such as Beckford (1978), Richardson, J. (1978), and Wilson, B. (1975).

[35]Shumate (1996), p.22.

[36]Shumate (1996), pp.260-62, 281-82 describes how certain dualistic aspects of Platonic discourse have become naturalised within western culture such that they are no longer marked as specifically Platonic. The *Metamorphoses* represent an early stage in this process. For Shumate, p.261: "all conversions and narratives about them are Platonic, at least in the West."

1.1.3 Balancing the Elements of Conversion

As regards the first of these dilemmas, one cannot but feel that Meeks is right to assert the importance of the social and moral elements of conversion. Shumate's argument would have been strengthened by a demonstration of the connection between the shift in cognitive paradigms she emphasises and these other elements of conversion, especially since it is not obvious that they are as completely lacking in the *Metamorphoses* as Meeks suggests.[37] By relying so heavily on James, Shumate reproduces one of Nock's errors even as she criticises him.[38] If subsequent study of conversion in modern western society has made James' individualism suspect, how much more so in relation to the ancient world. Yet the effect of giving full weight to communities and their ethics should not be to produce an equally dubious neglect of individuals and their experience. The understanding operative in this thesis will therefore be that conversion is "*an experience rooted in both self and society. It involves a personally acknowledged transformation of self and a socially recognised display of change.*"[39]

To commit oneself to even such a general understanding as this is undoubtedly to imply that there are features of conversion common to a wide variety of contexts. While providing an important corrective to Nock's tendency to project back

[37]It certainly was not to Gallagher, see above p.6 n.21. To give one example, although Lucius' conversion does not result in the adoption of a Jewish or Christian type of sexual morality, it does mark the decisive subordination of sexual pleasure to religious concerns. Note how the disrobing Photis is described as "the picture of Venus rising from the ocean waves"(II.17), but is never mentioned in Book XI having been displaced by the vision of Isis which emerged "suddenly from the midst of the sea" (XI.3).

[38]Although to be fair, Shumate is deliberately attempting to correct readings of the *Metamorphoses* which, (1996) p.11, "reproduce a blind spot that characterises the study of Greco-Roman paganism in general: they focus entirely on the externalised manifestations and the narratives of religion - rituals, actions, myths - while avoiding the question of what emotional and cognitive content such actions and myths, and indeed cult membership and a relationship with the divine in general, had for the religious individual." She also recognises that a shift in cognitive paradigms is not the only type of conversion, and speaks of instances in which moral transformation is central. However, even here the influence of James is sufficiently strong that the community into which an individual is converted receives little attention. See Shumate (1996), pp.14-15 and pp.145-48.

[39]Jules-Rosette (1976), p.132. My italics. This extraordinary article is a sociological analysis from the pen of a researcher who experienced conversion to the African Christian sect (The Apostles of John Maranke) which she was studying.

onto previous eras a rather post-enlightenment, individualistic and Protestant set of assumptions about what is truly important in religion and in conversion, the extreme particularism advocated by scholars such as Morrison entails its own difficulties. For one thing, "in the Middle Ages, the term *conversion* described not only the complex experience that sophisticated monastic intellectuals knew; it also included a wide range of experiences such intellectuals might have had some difficulty in describing as conversion in the true sense."[40] For another, "though, in absolute terms, all religions and all cultures are unique, the faiths we know as world religions show striking continuities over time and space."[41] Whether or not her attribution of such commonality to Platonic dualism is correct, Shumate is right to assert the existence of some common elements in conversion experiences and accounts, both across time and across the boundaries of religious traditions.

Yet to say that is not to say that conversion is somehow essentially the same in every context. Rambo's protest against definitions of conversion rooted in particular religious traditions overlooks the point that, even could an abstract neutral definition of conversion be constructed, no conversion experience could wholly conform to it, since it is to, or within, such particular traditions that conversions take place. The understanding of conversion adopted above is therefore not an alternative to the careful exploration of particular understandings of conversion. I agree with Morrison that such explorations are vitally necessary, since actual cases of conversion are always labelled as such from particular perspectives.[42] I doubt, however, that when undertaking such explorations it is possible to treat conversion entirely as the subject of analysis. In Morrison's case, it seems clear that it is the desire to find a conception of conversion as far removed as possible from that proposed by Nock and James which partially shapes

[40]Muldoon (1997), p.3. His italics.
[41]Hefner (1993), p.5.
[42]A point which should be appreciated by any student of the New Testament who has consulted the literature which considers whether Paul was a convert. It is often unclear on the basis of whose perspective the question is being debated. For example, whether Paul would have considered himself to have converted and whether those synagogue communities offended by his ministry would have done so are rather different questions. See below, p.26.

his decision to restrict his examination of conversion in the Middle Ages to twelfth century monasticism.[43] Preconceptions play their part and so, while regarding the understanding of conversion I have adopted above (pp.10-11) as too imprecise to be, in any meaningful sense, a tool of analysis, I would regard it as a helpful 'rough guide' in undertaking precisely the sort of explorations favoured by Morrison.

The advantage of such a 'rough guide' over a more precise analytical tool is its ability to balance similarity and difference. On the one hand, it recognises that there are features of conversion common to many contexts. By equally emphasising the rootedness of the conversion experience in both self and society, it alerts the researcher to the need to examine evidence of the transformation of self in both its individual and communal dimensions. This is crucial, since one doubts that it is possible to produce a rounded portrayal of any particular understanding of conversion without paying attention to both.[44] Yet on the other hand, it also recognises the distinctiveness of particular understandings of conversion. The manifestations of the individual and communal dimensions of conversion, and the relationships between them, vary enormously.

1.2 Understanding the Convert

1.2.1 The Active Convert

If the emphasis of the largely literary and/or historical studies cited in the above discussion has been primarily on understanding the event or process of conversion, then it is fair to say that the main emphasis of many recent sociological studies has been on understanding the convert. Responding to the success enjoyed by

[43]Morrison (1992a), p.3 comments that "in Nock's view, conversion was largely a change of mind or behaviour marked by a single, identifiable event in history ...Conversion, in other words, was a turning point, or peripety." He contrasts this, p.66, with the twelfth century monastic view that "the idea of conversion described continuing and danger-filled transformation, rather than abrupt and permanent change."

[44]Indeed, one possible criticism of Morrison (1992a) is that although his work is on the hermeneutics of conversion in twelfth century monasticism, the monastic communities themselves remain curiously disembodied throughout the book. The focus is on the ideas rather to the exclusion of the social reality which the ideas were shaped by, and which they helped to shape.

conversionist cults in contemporary North America, and confronting a popular perspective which attributed such success to manipulative techniques, sociologists examining these movements began to suggest that, far from being the passive victims of cult leaders, converts engaged actively and willingly in the process of their own conversion.[45] This approach was very different from that of earlier studies, which had often resorted to explaining conversion in terms of various forms of psychological deficiency on the part of the convert.[46] It has been pointed out that the question really being asked in such studies was how the religious in general, and converts in particular, could possibly believe what they professed.[47]

The first significant break with this psychological approach came in the mid-1960s in the work of John Lofland and Rodney Stark, who conducted research on an obscure Korean millenarian cult newly arrived in North America.[48] Although their findings can only appear somewhat crudely deterministic to the reader of the late-1990s, their work was significant in that it combined an emphasis on the psychological predisposition of the convert with an attempt to explain how such a predisposition was activated in the case of some but not in that of others. Here external influences were important, but the ones stressed were what could be termed 'normal' social processes over which the convert enjoyed some control, such as the formation of affective ties with existing members of the cult.[49] This element of Lofland and Stark's analysis provided a

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[45]For a clear account of this shift from a passive to an active paradigm of the convert see Richardson, J. (1985), and Kilbourne and Richardson (1988). The latter is particularly helpful in explaining how this new paradigm interacts with, and exists alongside, earlier ones.

[46]This had been, so to speak, the flipside of James' sympathetic characterisation of conversion as providing the necessary resolution of psychological difficulties. Note the contrast between the unhappy pre-convert and the happy convert in his definition of conversion. See above, p.5.

[47]Taylor (1978), p.316.

[48]Lofland and Stark (1965). Perhaps fortunately for their subsequent academic careers, this obscure cult did not remain so for long. Lofland and Stark were in fact observing the Unification Church or 'Moonies.'

[49]This emphasis on conversion as a social process also finally broke the link established by James (1902), pp.206-08 between the speed of a conversion and the degree to which converts were in control of what was happening to them. James had identified gradual conversions as volitional but sudden ones as acts of self-surrender.

crucial 'jumping-off' point for those who were to develop further the concept of the active convert.[50]

This development took the form of an emphasis on the interaction between converts and the communities they enter. Articles appeared arguing that social networks play a crucial role in conversion but only for those already actively involved in religious seeking.[51] Converts act to discover and make use of the particular means of personal transformation offered by, and institutionalised within, a conversionist group, possibly 'trying out' several groups in the process.[52] There is a considerable period during which converts behave entirely according to the expectations of the community they have joined, but are privately less than fully convinced as to the truth of that community's message. In effect, they are trying out a role, learning how to be a convert.[53] The accounts which they offer of their conversion experiences are also constructed according to the expectations of the community, thus influencing the descriptions offered of pre-conversion dispositions,[54] and raising the possibility that individual converts may subtly revise their accounts as the norms of the community evolve.[55]

Such approaches eventually led to attempts to define the convert as a social type, distinguishable from others on the basis of the different changes made by the individual in order to embrace the role of the convert. David Snow and Richard Machalek focus on converts' talk and reasoning, arguing that conversion involves a

[50]Richardson, J. (1985), p.169 points out that many of those who have done so were pupils of Lofland. Stark himself has preferred instead to concentrate on the impact of social processes upon potential converts, emphasising both that social networks play a vital role in conversion and that converts make rational choices in relation to the perceived compensations and rewards offered by religious groups. Religions succeed if they are able to satisfy social needs. Studies such as Bader and DeMaris (1996), and Kox, Meeus and Hart (1991) suggest that Stark's work has considerable value in a modern western setting. However, Stark's recent attempt to apply his ideas to the rise of early Christianity suffers from a lack of attention to questions of cultural particularity. For example, Stark infers the growth pattern and class composition of early Christianity from the success of Mormonism in modern North America. See Stark (1996), chapters 1 and 2.
[51]Heirich (1977).
[52]Straus (1979).
[53]Balch (1980).
[54]Taylor (1978).
[55]Beckford (1978).

change in universes of discourse, the broad interpretative frameworks in terms of which people live and organise experience.[56] There are four main indicators of such paradigmatic change - biographical reconstruction (converts will reinterpret their past life in light of the present), the adoption of a master attribution scheme (converts will ultimately attribute all events to a single cause), the suspension of analogical reasoning (converts will resist metaphors which imply that their own group or world view can be compared to others), and the embracing of a master role (converts will see their role within a religious group as the core of their identity and all other role identities will be subordinate). While these suggestions are stimulating, they fail to define the convert as a social type. Of the four indicators proposed by Snow and Machalek, only biographical reconstruction is restricted to converts. In so far as they are accurate descriptions of religious universes of discourse, the other three indicators could also be true of those with a lifelong religious commitment.[57]

1.2.2 Conversion Accounts and Conversion Experiences

Thus, the attempt to understand the convert as an active participant in his or her own transformation has come to focus increasingly on the conversion account as the arena in which that activity is most clearly displayed. It had already been argued that "accounts of conversion experience constitute an inextricable part of the experience to which they refer and whose very observable, accountable and 'researchable' character bears witness to its artful accomplishment."[58] Underlying this is the recognition that human beings are interpretative creatures for whom to have an experience is to interpret it. Indeed, experience is only comprehensible on the basis of interpretation, and thus, as the above quotation indicates, one cannot sharply distinguish between the two since they

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[56]Snow and Machalek (1983) and (1984). It should be noted how similar in broad terms is their conception of conversion as a shift in universes of discourse to Shumate's conception of conversion as a shift in cognitive paradigms. Yet the content which Snow and Machalek give to this relates to the individual as part of a community, rather than in isolation.
[57]Staples and Mauss (1987); Segal (1990), p.28.
[58]Taylor (1978), p.319.

are inextricably linked.[59] Researchers may therefore be misled by accounts which discern conversion as that which was always meant to be, and therefore offer intimations of predispositional factors which can only be seen retrospectively and would not have been apparent had the subject been examined by a researcher prior to conversion. Allowance must be made for biographical reconstruction.

There are a variety of ways of doing so, and I have identified at least three different approaches. They are:

(i) *To regard conversion accounts as inherently and especially unreliable.* Snow and Machalek had themselves concluded that "converts are *uniquely* denied impartial knowledge about the factors that might have precipitated conversion."[60] In an article on Paul and Augustine, Paula Fredriksen suggests that "the conversion account is both apologetic and anachronistic ...the conversion account, never disinterested, is a condensed, or disguised, description of the convert's *present*, which he legitimates through his retrospective creation of a past and a self."[61] The difficulty with this position is that one doubts that problems of reliability are unique to converts. The interpreted nature of all experience means that no individual can enjoy unmediated access to their own past. Whatever difficulties we face in knowing our own pasts are therefore shared by all, and not just converts. While it may not be the intention of those propounding it, the opinion that converts are especially unreliable embodies a stereotype

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[59]Shumate (1996), p.17: "One could say that for all intents and purposes there is no such thing as experience per se or, to put it more precisely, there may be experience but it is not possible for it to have any meaning outside of an attributional system."

[60]Snow and Machalek (1983), p.280. My italics. This proposition was supported by the fact that converts to Nichiren Shoshu Buddhism often spoke of their former lives as an illusion. Yet several of their subjects were quite clear that, for example, they felt contented with life prior to their conversion. It is simply that they now regard that contentment as having been illusory. Far from being highly misleading, this would seem to suggest some degree of awareness of the nature of biographical reconstruction on the part of the converts themselves.

[61]Fredriksen (1986), p.33. Her italics. The most significant element of the evidence upon which Fredriksen bases this claim is the alleged irreconcilability of the account of his own conversion in Augustine's *Confessions* with the picture of him which emerges from the *Dialogues* he wrote at the time. For accounts of Augustine's development which perceive considerably more continuity see Markus (1994), chapter XVIII and O'Connell (1996), pp.259-309.

of the convert as dangerous deceiver, and does so just as surely as a stereotype of the convert as inadequate victim lurked behind the emphasis of earlier studies upon psychological deficiency. The history of the study of conversion is also to some degree the history of evolving forms of scholarly prejudice against converts.

(ii) To assert that biographical reconstruction is symptomatic of wider epistemological difficulties. *Conversion accounts are inherently unreliable, but they are not thereby unusual.* Morrison suggests that "the experience of conversion is inaccessible through the screen of the text and, indeed, that there is, interpretatively speaking, little to distinguish a fictive reconstruction of an actual event from the fictional invention of one that never happened."[62] Those studying conversion should therefore concentrate on the accounts of conversion themselves, reconstructing the processes of composition and habits of thought which shaped them.[63] Thus, there is the phenomenon of conversion experience and there is the name conversion, but the thing and its name are quite distinct, conversion accounts revealing not the thing but the understanding(s) of conversion packed into the name. On this basis, the problem of the perceived unreliability of converts' accounts of their own experiences is neutralised and universalised by attributing that problem not to converts themselves, but to the nature of language. Converts are epistemologically disabled not because they are converts, but because they are human beings.

(iii) *To assert that the conversion account constitutes the conversion experience.* On this view, conversion accounts do not represent conversion experiences, and their words do not refer to the thing they purport to describe. Expressing it crudely, the conversion account *is* the conversion. Peter Stromberg argues that the claims of

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[62]Morrison (1992b), p.144.

[63]Morrison (1992a), p.39 makes much of the mediaeval writers awareness "not only that their work was proportionately fictional but that it was necessarily fictional, for the mind, bound to its own nature, had to use the thoughts and words available through nature to speak about supernatural things." Yet even when coupled with the belief that such fictional elements could and must convey truth, this speaks more of a sense that words can only partially and imperfectly represent an experience of the supernatural like conversion, rather than of the impossibility of their doing so at all.

converts that their experiences have changed them in fundamental ways "have ultimately to do with the possibility that a particular language may bring about self-transformation ...it is through the use of language in the conversion narrative that the processes of increased commitment and self-transformation take place."[64] The response of researchers should be to "abandon the search for reality beyond the convert's speech and to look instead at the speech itself, for it is through language that the conversion occurred in the first place and also through language that the conversion is now re-lived as the convert tells his tale."[65] This position radically alters the terms of the debate about reliability. On the one hand, if conversion is the achievement of self-transformation through the adoption of a particular language then, in offering a researcher samples of that language, the convert provides access to that which brought about, and sustains, his or her transformation. Particular languages, and therefore conversion accounts, may undergo internal development over time but, since conversion is constituted by language, this does not entail falsification. Subsequent modifications of the particular language adopted by a convert also alter the 'experience.'[66] On the other hand, all conversion accounts are inherently unreliable precisely in that they purport to refer to an independent experience not constituted solely by their own language.

For all the differences between these three positions, it is not difficult to detect the influence of post-modern hermeneutics upon them all. The relationship between the convert and the conversion experience is being construed in parallel ways to that between the reader and a text. Although all understand the activity of the reader/convert in different ways, it is his or her activity in reconstructing the text/experience which is held to be important, and which bestows meaning, not some

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[64]Stromberg (1993), p.xi. In this study the particular language examined is that of evangelical Christianity.

[65]Stromberg (1993), p.3.

[66]The consequences of this are expressed clearly by Griffith (1990), pp.161-62: "Truth in autobiography cannot be measured by the standard of factual accuracy alone ...A truthful narrative may be said to create a myth of the self that is thoroughly informed by, and hence supportive of, the principle its author has identified through conversion."

given factor in the text/experience itself.[67] Either such given factors are wholly inaccessible, or their existence is entirely constituted by the account. Perhaps because the image of the reader hovers so palpably in the background, this has tended to produce a focus on the individual. Despite the fact that the concept of biographical reconstruction developed from an awareness of the way in which community norms mould the accounts offered by converts, communities come to be treated simply as suppliers of language. At this point, the concept of the active convert is in danger of turning into the concept of the autonomous one.

In contrast, but with similar consequences for our view of the conversion experience, Gallagher emphasises the wider role played by communities.[68] He does so by examining not only the reconstruction of conversion experiences, but also their preconstruction.[69] Communities, together with the vocabularies of belief they employ, engender experience, not vice versa. "Beliefs and attitudes are formative of, rather than consequent upon, the experience. They define in advance what experiences are possible."[70] Conversion accounts simply reflect the communal beliefs and concepts which structure conversion experiences. When such views on preconstruction are added to the three approaches to reconstruction examined above, then a common trend emerges: experience is eclipsed, and conversion explored solely as a construct. I disagree with this trend in the following two ways:

(i) The recognition that religious traditions exercise profound influence over the preconstruction, and reconstruction, of conversion experiences and accounts

[67]Shumate (1996), p.14: "Formulating and accepting one interpretation of any text, including the text of the world, is, like religious belief, an act of faith; and ...all closure is the product of an act of will on the part of a reader rather than a feature of objective reality." While accepting that it is sometimes helpful to speak of the social world as a text for the purposes of metaphor and analogy (see below, pp.35-36), and recognising that language is one of the central features of social life, I am ill at ease with positions which imply that a social process like conversion is little different from a text. Converts may produce texts containing accounts of their experiences which scholars then read but, in reconstructing their experiences, converts themselves are not reading a text.

[68]See above, pp.5-6.

[69]Preconstruction is my term, not Gallagher's.

[70]Gallagher (1990), p.138 quoting Proudfoot (1985).

does not necessarily imply that experience is either completely inaccessible or reducible to such constructions. It is also possible to argue that construction *enables* experience. As Lofland and Skonovd observe, "the conversion experience *itself* is partly moulded by expectations of what conversion is about or 'like', and ...there is therefore the probability of a relatively 'good fit' between the 'real' experiences and the paradigmatic accounts."[71] Precisely because human beings can only experience what they can conceive, and precisely because all experience is only comprehensible on the basis of interpretation, conversion accounts may refer to conversion experiences.

(ii) Somewhat significantly given that the subject under discussion is conversion, both preconstruction and reconstruction have a limited capacity to explain religious change. In the latter case, this is because the paradigms of conversion authorised by communities develop over time, and *one* of the motors of such development may be the accounts of their experiences offered by converts.[72] The existence of authorised interpretations does not eliminate the possibility of originality within interpretation since the traditional materials provided by such authorised interpretations need not always be deployed in entirely traditional ways. In the former case, it is not clear how preconstruction can account for the emergence of new religious movements. If it is defined in advance which experiences are possible, then how are we to explain the appearance of new accounts of religious experience?[73] "The fact that symbols *change* in meaning, sometimes slowly, sometimes with amazing speed, is the surest indication that something more than human linguistic patterns are at work and that the term *experience* points to something real in the world that is not completely captured by our pre-set explanations and interpretations. The traffic, in short, moves both ways.

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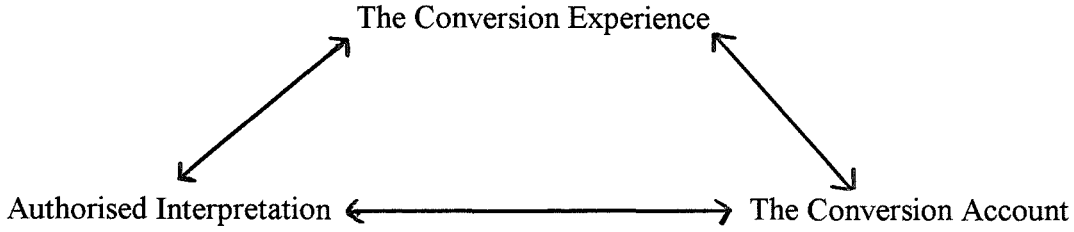
[71]Lofland and Skonovd (1981), p.374. Their italics. Lofland and Skonovd themselves explore conversion motifs, seeking to identify several different types of conversion. This is not uninteresting but, as they themselves admit, is of limited usefulness in terms of analysis simply because no actual conversion ever conforms entirely to these ideal types.

[72]Far from the least significant example of this may be Paul himself.

[73]Rather than arguing that preconstruction defines in advance which experiences are possible, I would suggest that its role is to define which experiences are impossible. Human beings cannot experience what they cannot conceive, but in many contexts the powers of human conception are rather wide.

Our language shapes our experience, but our experience also stretches, reshapes, and sometimes even shatters our language."[74]

For these reasons, I do not believe that conversion experiences are either completely inaccessible or constituted solely by language. Instead, experience forms one element in a set of complex reciprocal relationships. As illustrated by the simple diagram below, such relationships exist between (i) the conversion experience and its authorised interpretation, (ii) such authorised interpretation and the conversion account, and (iii) the conversion experience and the conversion account.



In each of these relationships, each element influences, and is influenced by, the other.[75] This indicates that while conversion accounts certainly do develop, they do not necessarily distort. They have the potential to tell scholars not only of the present, but also of the past.

1.2.3 Summary

In **1.1** the difficulties of understanding conversion were examined. Is conversion a universal phenomenon, or a particular one? Is it an individual event/process, or a social one? The solutions proposed recognise the existence of common elements in conversion experiences and accounts, both across time and across the boundaries of religious traditions. However, this does not imply that conversion is the 'same' in every context. Particular understandings of conversion vary enormously, and detailed

[74]Johnson (1998), p.50. His italics.

[75]Although the balance of such reciprocal influence, and the kind of influence exercised, will vary from case to case, it is important that studies of conversion recognise the significance of all three.

explorations of them are necessary. The guide adopted for such explorations (pp.10-11) limits its assertion of common elements to the recognition that conversion is rooted in both the individual and society. The transformation of self involved is both personally acknowledged and socially recognised. In **1.2** it was noted that recent scholarship has rejected approaches to understanding the convert which emphasise psychological deficiency. In their place have appeared approaches which stress the degree to which the convert is active, and which focus particular attention on the convert's engagement in biographical reconstruction (converts reinterpret their past life in the light of the present). Here, and in the study of the way in which communal beliefs and attitudes engender experience (preconstruction), it is often suggested either that conversion experiences are completely inaccessible, or that they are entirely constituted by the language adopted at conversion. I take issue with this, concluding that, far from eliminating experience, construction enables it, and that experience itself influences conversion accounts, and authorised interpretations of conversion, as well as being influenced by them.

1.3 Conversion in Recent New Testament Study

Despite the fact that, to state the obvious, early Christianity was a new religious movement which could only grow by persuading outsiders to accept its message and enter its communities, the subject of conversion has received little attention from New Testament scholars.[76] There are only two recent works of any significance, *From Darkness to Light* by Beverly Gaventa, and *Paul the Convert* by Alan Segal.

1.3.1 Beverly Gaventa

Gaventa surveys the attitudes towards conversion displayed in several New Testament texts (Luke-Acts, Paul's letters, John, 1 Peter), and in order to do so defines her first task as being "to distinguish between conversion and other types of

[76]A fact commented upon by Gaventa (1986b), p.3.

change."[77] Such distinctions are drawn on the basis of the degree of change involved in any given case, and here Gaventa relies upon the work of sociologist Richard Travisano who seeks to distinguish between conversion and change of a lesser magnitude, which he terms alternation. The difference between the two is that alternation denotes transitions to personal identities which, even if not encouraged, are at least permitted within an individual's existing universe of discourse. In contrast, conversion denotes the transition to an identity which is proscribed. "The ideal typical conversion can be thought of as the embracing of a negative identity. The person becomes something which was specifically prohibited."[78] Conversion therefore denotes change of a very high magnitude.[79]

Perhaps conscious of this, Gaventa introduces 'transformation' as a new category between 'alternation' and 'conversion'. This she holds to denote change which is great, but which falls short of a complete rejection of the past, instead involving a "re-cognition of the past."[80] This is compared to a Kuhnian paradigm shift in the natural sciences where the available data is not rejected, but its interpretation radically transformed. While the affinities of this idea of transformation with that of biographical reconstruction are obvious and potentially useful, Gaventa never succeeds in resolving certain confusions between this category and that of conversion. The introduction of transformation leaves conversion as a complete negation or rejection of the past, and one doubts that such a thing is actually possible within normal social life.[81] Short of destruction of the personality via torture or illness, no human being is a slate which can

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[77]Gaventa (1986b), p.8.

[78]Travisano (1970), p.601. In subsequent sociological research Travisano's paper proved influential not so much for his distinction between conversion and alternation itself as for the fact that it implied an active subject seeking out changes in identity. See Richardson, J. (1985), p.171.

[79]And, implicitly, also involves deviancy, something which is not obviously true in all contexts.

[80]Gaventa (1986b), p.11. One of the problems of Gaventa's work is that at this stage she terms her three categories 'alternation', 'transformation' and 'conversion', so implying three categories of personal change, one of which qualifies as conversion. Yet by the conclusion, pp.146-52, she is discussing three types of conversion, the conversion category of the introduction being dubbed 'pendulum-like conversion.' Her definition of conversion thus suffers from self-inflicted confusion.

[81]Travisano himself had not spoken of a general rejection or negation of the past, but instead of the embracing of forbidden identities which may, of course, include elements drawn from the past. This point is neatly illustrated by the fact that Travisano regards Jews who become Jewish Christians as an example of the embrace of a proscribed identity and hence of conversion. See Travisano (1970), pp.598-600.

be wiped clean. Gaventa's handling of Paul himself illustrates these problems clearly. Placing the Paul of his own letters in the category of transformation, Gaventa quite properly points to his use of the language of transformation.[82] Yet given Paul's self-confessed hostility to the church prior to his transformation, it is also difficult to regard his experience as anything other than a clear example of the embrace of a negative identity which had been specifically prohibited within his existing universe of discourse. The distinction between transformation and conversion thus collapses. While her expositions of individual passages remain of interest, Gaventa's study offers little of continuing methodological value.[83]

1.3.2 Alan Segal

In contrast to Gaventa's survey of several New Testament texts, Segal confines himself to the letters of Paul and to Luke's portrayal of him. While also pointing to the fact that Paul understood himself and others becoming Christians in terms of transformation, Segal takes this not as evidence for a type of change falling short of that of conversion but, instead, as evidence that Paul was indeed a convert. This conclusion is based on the continued prominent use of the metaphor of transformation in modern studies of conversion,[84] the evidence provided by Paul's own letters of biographical reconstruction,[85] and the fact that, on becoming a Christian, Paul changed communities.[86] The last of these three indicators attains a particular significance, for although Paul did not lose "his commitment to Judaism, he chose to express that commitment in an entirely novel way, by participating in a Gentile community."[87] This

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[82]Gaventa (1986b), pp.40-46. Only Paul as presented by Luke and some of the imagery in John and 1 Peter fall into the category of conversion, with Cornelius and the Ethiopian eunuch of Acts falling into that of alternation.

[83]It should be remembered, in relation to both Gaventa and Segal, that the 1990s has seen a veritable explosion of literature on conversion. It is therefore perhaps not surprising that their methodology should now appear inadequate.

[84]Segal (1990), pp.28-29. The centrality of the image of transformation in the accounts of conversion offered by modern social science provides yet another objection to Gaventa's attempt to distinguish between conversion and transformation.

[85]ibid.

[86]Segal (1990), p.6.

[87]Segal (1990), p.75.

was a virtually unique change of communities in Paul's own social context,[88] and Segal argues that it provided an important impetus for Paul's theology. Holding to a tradition of Jewish mystical apocalypticism which identified the principal angelic figure of the Old Testament as the *Kavod* (glory) of God, Paul interpreted his vision of the risen Christ as a revelation that the two figures were one and the same.[89] Segal is thus able to assert strong connections between Paul's conversion experience, his change of communities, and his theology.

There is much to be applauded here, not least Segal's desire to pay full attention to both the personal and social dimensions of Paul's transformation. Whether or not one accepts that Paul is a representative of a Jewish tradition of mystical apocalypticism, Segal's argument that it provided the resources by which Paul interpreted his vision of the risen Christ is undeniably stimulating. It provides an illustration of how a convert may be active in fresh and creative ways, but be so in relation to communities and the interpretative traditions which they authorise, suggesting that, in order to understand his experience, Paul made use of the authorised interpretative traditions of both the community he left and that which he joined. Segal's Paul is a convert who is active, but scarcely autonomous. Further, Segal's tying together of experience, community and theology contrasts with much recent Pauline scholarship where the tendency has been to neglect the significance of Paul's experience, emphasising the importance of subsequent communal factors in the development of his theology.[90] Segal reasserts the significance of experience without reverting either to discredited portrayals of guilt as the driving force behind Paul's conversion, or to individualistic conceptions of Paul as an isolated passive subject utterly swamped by external powers beyond his control. By doing so he provides the opportunity for debate to advance.

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[88]Segal (1990), p.295.

[89]See Segal (1990), pp.34-71 for an extended discussion of mystical apocalypticism and its relationship to Paul's experience.

[90]For a discussion of this trend, which came in the wake of E.P. Sanders' influential re-reading of first century Judaism, see **2.1**.

Despite these virtues, there are also some difficulties, one of which concerns the measurement of change. Although recognising early Christianity to have formed a sect within Judaism, Segal asserts Paul to have been a convert on the basis that "in modern usage and social science the word *conversion* can denote moving from one sect or denomination to another within the same religion, if the change is radical."[91] The problem here is one of definition. From whose perspective is a change of community to be deemed radical? Is it that of the 'convert', that of the community left or the community joined, or that of the scholar? On Segal's reading, Paul was a convert without exiting Judaism and, moreover, one who insisted that "the Jew as well as the Gentile must be converted, and the new community that Jesus founded must be a community of converts."[92] Yet Paul's repeated submission to physical punishment at the hands of synagogue authorities (2 Cor. 11:24) suggests a perception on their part that he had significantly violated the boundaries of Judaism, even as it bears witness to Paul's own determination to deny that his activities did so. Further, the very subtitle of Segal's book, *The Apostolate and Apostasy of Saul the Pharisee*, reflects subsequent Jewish perceptions that Paul was someone who abandoned Judaism. These perspectival difficulties do not invalidate Segal's reading of Paul or his insistence that Paul was a convert, but they do suggest that his desire to distil the most value-neutral definition of conversion possible is a forlorn one.[93] As in Gaventa's work, the attempt to define conversion on the basis of the degree of change involved encounters considerable difficulties.

The emphasis which Segal places on Paul's use of the metaphor of transformation also demands comment. By pointing to the fact that modern social science frequently describes conversion in terms of transformation, Segal deflects any potential impact of the acknowledged fact that Paul rarely uses terms which could

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[91]Segal (1990), p.6. His italics.
[92]Segal (1990), p.113.
[93]Segal (1990), p.285. Shumate (1996), p.22 offers similar criticism.

legitimately be translated into English using the noun 'conversion' or the verb 'to convert'.[94] Yet he does so without ever asking whether this feature of social scientific accounts may not be the result of the influence of Paul's own letters as seminal documents within western civilisation, something openly acknowledged by many sociologists.[95] To some degree, a convert in the modern world is someone of whom it is appropriate to use Paul's vocabulary.[96] This circularity thus actually serves to strengthen Segal's point that Paul was indeed a convert. There is something more than a little odd about the position of those who seek to deny that Paul was a convert when it is Paul's own thought which has supplied so much of the content of subsequent understandings of conversion.[97] However, such support is double-edged for, even as it suggests that Paul was a convert, it renders that conclusion almost tautological, robbing it of much of its analytical power. We are once again brought face to face with the limitations of definitions of conversion as analytical tools.

1.3.3 Summary

Despite the virtues of their work, the studies by Beverley Gaventa and Alan Segal exhibit the problems attendant upon attempts to define conversion in terms of types or degrees of change. In Gaventa's case, the boundaries between some of her categories of change are blurred, and neither she nor Segal address the question of from whose perspective types and degrees of change are assessed. The illusion that a more or

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[94]Paul rarely uses the Greek verbs ἐπιστρέφω (I turn) or μετανοέω (I repent, I change my mind). This is explained by Gaventa (1986b), pp.40-46 as the result of a preference on Paul's part for terms which reflect divine, rather than human, initiative. Witherup (1994), p.18 points to the previous use of these terms to refer to the restoration of Jews to an unimpaired relationship with God rather than to an entirely new relationship. Segal (1990), p.21 insists: "Paul is a convert in the modern sense of the term." But is there a single modern sense of the term?

[95]E.g. Rambo (1993), pp.xi & 4; Richardson, J. (1985), p.164; Snow and Machalek (1984), p.169. Some speak directly of Paul, others of biblical inheritance, or of the theological traditions in which they belong or grew up.

[96]We are thus left in the somewhat paradoxical situation that the Greek equivalents for the English term conversion, itself derived from the Latin verb *convertere*, 'to turn round', are not much employed by Paul himself, but that the understanding(s) packed into that term in English-speaking cultures are heavily influenced by him. It is the latter which seems the more significant fact, unless it is to be deemed inadmissible to refer to those who believed in Christ through Paul's ministry as converts.

[97]Particularly the position of Krister Stendahl, whose view that Paul was not a convert is discussed at **5.2.1**.

less neutral definition of conversion is possible appears a real danger here. Further, the strong influence exercised by Paul over modern conceptions of conversion raises other problems. The application to early Christianity, in order to identify conversion and converts, of a definition or typology of conversion based upon social-scientific studies from modern North America, runs the risk of circularity. My adoption of a rather less closely defined understanding of conversion (pp.10-11) seeks to avoid these problems by balancing the recognition of common elements in many conversion experiences and accounts with the acknowledgement that this does not mean that conversion is the 'same' in every context. Consciousness of the existence of common elements should simply play a sensitising role, suggesting likely lines of enquiry in particular cases, and providing a reminder of the need to pay attention to both the individual and communal dimensions of conversion.

1.4 Questions and Resources

1.4.1 Selection of Subjects and Questions

I therefore intend to explore particular understandings of conversion current within early Christianity, making them the subject of analysis. Those selected are that of the apostle Paul and that of the church at Corinth, as reflected in 1 Corinthians. The rationale behind this selection is twofold. Firstly, Paul spent his entire ministry engaged in making converts. It therefore seems something of a glaring omission that within the vast literature devoted to him there is no study which makes a detailed examination of his understanding of conversion. Despite extensive discussion of his own conversion, and of its impact on his theology, there is little material exploring Paul's attitude towards the conversion of others.[98] To rigidly separate these two areas of enquiry would be artificial since one of the aspects of his theology upon which Paul's

[98]Although the studies of Gaventa and Segal encroach onto this area, their focus is much more, as the title of Segal's book implies, on Paul's own conversion and its consequences. Gaventa (1986b) devotes pp.17-40 to Paul's accounts of his own experience, but only pp.40-46 to the evidence he provides concerning the conversion of others.

experience may have impacted is his understanding of the conversion of others. In my view this impact was significant, and I therefore devote a chapter to what Paul tells the reader of his own experience. At this point the discussion above (**1.2.2**) as to whether biographical reconstruction implies that conversion accounts necessarily distort the past has considerable significance. Nevertheless, I am attempting to redress an imbalance and, even were one to take the contrary view that Paul was not a convert and that his own experience did not significantly influence his later understanding of the conversion of others, the chapters dealing with this latter topic would remain valid in their own right.

Secondly, by also examining the understanding of conversion current within the church at Corinth I avoid the false impression that Paul's view of conversion was the only one current within early Christianity or even within those communities which he himself had founded. A comparison between these two understandings of conversion may thus illustrate the limited degree to which advocates of conversion can control the understandings of it constructed by their converts, and also some of the ways in which converts can be active in the context of community. One could undertake a study which compared Paul's understanding of conversion to that of another New Testament writer, so avoiding the difficulties inherent in mirror-reading,[99] but the specific opportunities offered by this interface between a community and its founder would be lost. Further, 1 Corinthians is unusual among the New Testament documents in the degree to which it concentrates on issues of communal life. It is therefore a particularly suitable text given my intention to focus upon the communal as well as the individual dimensions of conversion, offering as it does data about a community with a clearly defined historical and geographical location. Knowing that the Corinthian correspondence was sent by Paul to the church at Corinth during the sixth decade of the first century enables us to situate the Corinthian understanding of conversion more precisely within the wider context of Graeco-Roman culture than would otherwise be

[99]For a discussion of the possible pitfalls of mirror-reading, along with a defence of its propriety, see Barclay (1987).

possible, especially given the rich archaeological record available for first century Corinth and its environs.

Having thus selected the understandings of conversion to be explored, there remains the issue of how such explorations are to be conducted. What sort of questions are to be asked? Clearly it is desirable that the questions asked be ones which can be answered reasonably adequately employing the available evidence. While the New Testament texts contain some hints, answers to the admittedly fascinating question of *why* it was, historically speaking, that early Christianity succeeded in winning converts remain frustratingly elusive. This is not a debate I enter,[100] preferring instead to explore the understandings of conversion selected with two other broad questions in mind. They are (i) what does the available evidence reveal as to expectations of *how* conversion took place? and, perhaps with even more emphasis, (ii) what expectations are revealed as to the *consequences* of conversion? This second question will be pursued with particular reference to ethical behaviour and community life.

1.4.2 Selection of a Theoretical Resource

Defining some broad questions with which to approach the understandings of conversion selected for exploration still leaves open the issue of theoretical resources. My rejection of close definitions of conversion as tools of analysis is not a plea for a naively empirical approach which believes in the possibility of simply sticking to the facts. In my opinion, one of the most creative and stimulating theoretical approaches to be employed by a New Testament scholar in recent years is that found in David Horrell's *The Social Ethos of the Corinthian Correspondence*.[101] Drawing on the

[100] Those interested should consult Nock (1933), MacMullen (1981, 1984), and Stark (1996) among others. An illustration of the hazards awaiting the unwary is provided by Meeks (1984), pp.22-23,191-92 whose suggestion that Christianity was particularly attractive to those experiencing status inconsistency has found little support, despite the otherwise joyous reception accorded to the book.

[101] Horrell (1996). I dissent entirely from the criticisms of Horrell's approach offered by Esler (1998). In particular, the allegation that Horrell has made an unnecessary and unpersuasive attempt to substitute his own approach for the use of models (p.260) entirely misrepresents Horrell's argument. Far from attempting to impose a monolithic approach to the social-scientific study of the New Testament, Horrell simply offers an alternative to the use of models and suggests that New Testament scholars need to

theory of structuration developed by sociologist Anthony Giddens, Horrell explores the social ethos of Paul's letters to Corinth, and that of the later 1 Clement, seeking to determine whether or not their authors express symbolic orders which are ideological, i.e., whether they provide resources which enable dominant groups to present their own sectional interests as universal ones, portraying such domination as an inevitable element of social reality. This ideological criticism is not itself obviously relevant to the study of conversion. Yet as Horrell stresses, structuration is a general social theory which might be put to various other uses.[102] There are important elements of structuration theory which make it an extremely suitable theoretical resource for the study of conversion.

1.4.2.1 Alternatives to Structuration Theory

However, my selection of structuration theory is not based solely on its own merits. For a study of conversion, it is vital that the theoretical resources employed offer an adequate account of social change, and the alternatives to structuration theory struggle to do so. Functionalism, the favoured resource of Meeks and Theissen, "adopts an essentially static view of society."[103] Social activity is understood as fulfilling a function, often satisfying a need, in the setting in which it arose. This allows us to view societies as functioning wholes, but obscures the fact that the consequences of activity become the conditions on which subsequent activity is based. The ongoing character of social life is lost. To ask how various aspects of social activity functioned *within* the early churches can be fascinating and instructive, but can tell us relatively little about the processes by which they came to exist. Where the early churches are presupposed as the context within which social activity fulfils a function, it is precisely their character as communities of converts which is relegated to the background.[104]

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sharpen and refine their understanding of what constitutes a social-scientific model. I can find no suggestion in Horrell's work that such models cannot be usefully employed in New Testament study.

[102]Horrell (1996), p.53.

[103]Horrell (1996), p.37

[104]Theissen (ET 1982), pp.27-67 provides a clear example of this in his essay on legitimation and subsistence. In suggesting that there was conflict between itinerant charismatics and community organisers, his focus is not primarily on the relative effectiveness, in various contexts, of these lifestyles in winning converts, i.e., in creating communities. Although this is discussed, Theissen's main emphasis

Similarly, the valuable work of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann in the sociology of knowledge, while brilliantly describing the way in which symbolic universes are constructed and maintained, pays insufficient attention to social change. This deficiency stems not so much from an inherent failure in theory as from what might be termed a lack of a sense of history. Thus, while concluding that the proper object of sociological enquiry "is society as part of a human world, made by men, inhabited by men, and, in turn, making men, in an ongoing historical process,"[105] Berger and Luckmann's work offers no convincing description of the ongoing historical process itself. Attention is drawn to the construction of symbolic universes, the various means by which they are granted an aura of objective reality, and so to their moulding of human beings as social products, but, having shown how society acts back upon its human producers, little space is devoted to exploring how they in turn act to modify it. This emphasis "obscures the extent to which social order is continually reproduced only in and through the activities of human subjects, and hence neglects the important relationship between reproduction and transformation."[106] Berger and Luckmann's theory lacks a convincing account of how social change is generated. In relation to conversion, this difficulty was noted more than twenty years ago by Brian Taylor: "It is difficult to see how a Bergerian approach to religious knowledge can account at all for the initial *acquisition* or *transference* of religious and non-religious plausibility structures."[107]

Similar problems beset approaches based upon 'Mediterranean anthropology'. One might agree in broad terms with the hypothesis that "first century

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falls instead upon the function of these different lifestyles within the church. They provide competing modes of legitimation for the ministries of those adopting them.

[105]Berger and Luckmann (1967), p.211.

[106]Horrell (1996), p.41. See also Horrell (1993). While entirely agreeing with Horrell's point, I am not sure that his tendency to express it in the form of ideological criticism is helpful. Berger and Luckmann could surely argue that in drawing attention to the social construction of reality they also, by implication, expose the fact that sectional interests can be made to masquerade as universal ones.

[107]Taylor (1976), p.13. His italics. By this comment he means that while Berger and Luckmann's work demonstrates that all human beings live within, and contribute to, social constructions of reality, they provide no account of how individuals and groups come to dwell within one symbolic universe rather than another.

Mediterranean persons were strongly group-embedded, collectivist persons ...They were attuned to the values, attitudes, and beliefs of their in-group, with which they shared a common fate due to generation and geography."[108] First century Graeco-Roman society was clearly much less individualistic than the modern West. However, what is not so clear is how, given such a society, new groups like the church managed to gain a hearing.[109] How did collectivist persons come to join a new group, membership of which entailed a violation of expectations held by groups in which such persons were already embedded? Indeed, how is conversion possible in "a social system that downgraded personal 'change' as ancient Mediterranean society did?"[110] Interestingly, Segal attributes the possibility of conversion and of sectarian commitment in the first century to the existence within Hellenistic society of individual religious choice.[111] On this account it is the very existence of a degree of individual choice which fosters deep group commitment. Whether or not Segal's proposal is correct, it serves to illustrate the extent to which 'Mediterranean anthropology' simplifies the relationship between individuals and groups and omits to account for social change. When studying conversion to a new religious movement, this is, as with functionalism and the sociology of knowledge, something of a handicap.

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[108]Malina and Neyrey (1996), pp.16-17.

[109]Not clear either is the degree to which anthropological studies of peasant societies in the modern Mediterranean provide genuinely close parallels to first century Mediterranean society in general, or to particular expressions of it. I share the doubts expressed by Meggitt (1998b). Meggitt points to the work of Perkins (1995), who argues that Graeco-Roman culture possessed a strong and developing sense of the self. In relation to Mediterranean anthropology, the comment of Rohrbaugh (1996), p.2 is revealing: "no biblical writer had modern Americans in mind when he wrote ...all too few Americans have ancient Palestinian peasants in mind when they read the Bible." However justified the broad point that reading the Bible is always a cross-cultural exercise, it remains the case that neither Paul nor his converts were Palestinian peasants.

[110]Malina and Neyrey (1996), p.54. This observation is made in the course of a discussion of the means by which Paul, in Phil. 3:2-11, provides the necessary justification for his own culturally suspect abandonment of ancestral heritage. The claim that Paul did so by implying that he was imitating and sharing Christ's abandonment of the honour that was his by right (Phil. 2) is itself plausible, but does little to explain how, in a society where great importance was attached to the maintenance of honour, such a counter-cultural piece of self-justification could itself be credible.

[111]Segal (1990), pp.30-33. Even if one disputes this and suggests instead that it was typical for kin and household groups to make collective decisions to convert at the behest of their dominant male, one still needs to account for such decisions. Even group leaders are 'group-embedded' and might therefore normally be expected to conform to pre-existing group expectations.

1.4.2.2 Structuration Theory: Reproduction and Transformation

In contrast to these essentially static pictures of society, structuration theory attempts to provide an account of human social life which encompasses both continuity and change. As Giddens states, his theory "might accurately be described as an extended reflection upon a celebrated and oft quoted phrase in Marx. Marx comments that 'Men (let us immediately say human beings) make history, but not in circumstances of their own choosing.'"[112] This means that instead of concentrating primarily upon one or the other, any successful social theory must overcome the dualisms of agency and social structure, of human freedom and external constraint, of change and continuity, so transforming them into dualities. In other words, Giddens wishes not only to find a way to acknowledge the force of each of Marx's twin insights, but to practise them sociologically. He pursues this goal by means of drawing a distinction between social structures and social systems, terms which others have often regarded as interchangeable. For Giddens, social systems are composed of repeated social practices strung across varying spans of time and space, while social structures form the means by which these systems are organised into societal totalities. Social structures can fulfil this organising role because they are the rules and resources of social life which are drawn upon by individuals in every social situation. They are the means by which we know how to behave, the key to social competence. As such they have no presence in time-space apart from their instantiation in social practices. This 'virtual reality' means that social structures are reproduced in social practices and simultaneously laid open to transformation. On the one hand social structures account for the continuities displayed within human social life (reproduction), on the other they are themselves changed by that life (transformation).[113]

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[112]Giddens (1984), p.xxi. I therefore find incomprehensible the comment of Esler (1998), p.258 that "Horrell's own view rests on a presupposition concerning human behaviour which is itself biased in favour of maximising individuals' freedom and power."

[113]For the purposes of analysis, Giddens divides social structures into three types: structures of signification, of domination, and of legitimation. These three types of social structure and their complex relationship to each other are not matters pursued in this thesis. Those interested to explore further should consult Giddens (1984), pp.28-34.

To illustrate this theory, Giddens employs the analogy of language.[114] "When I utter a sentence I draw upon various syntactical rules ...These structural features of the language are the medium whereby I generate the utterance. But in producing a syntactically correct utterance I simultaneously contribute to the reproduction of the language as a whole. This view rejects the identification of structure with constraint: structure is both enabling and constraining."[115] Like the rules and resources of social life, syntactical rules both make meaningful communication possible and define or limit it, but themselves have no existence apart from the language. Further, again like language, the rules and resources of social life change through use. "Every act which contributes to the reproduction of a structure is also an act of production, a novel enterprise, and as such may initiate change by altering that structure at the same time as it reproduces it - as the meanings of words change in and through their use."[116] Thus, the possibility of transformation is inherent in every act of reproduction.[117] This double focus on reproduction and transformation is extremely helpful for a study of conversion. The emphasis on the latter makes it possible to grant full weight to the individual transformation involved in conversion, including the degree to which converts are active. Yet the equal emphasis on the former means that this can be done without lapsing into the view that human actions are essentially voluntary. If conversion experiences and conversion accounts change the rules and resources (structures) of social life, they do so from within. It is a basic error to "extricate human action from the contextuality of time-

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[114]It should be noted that this is an analogy only. See my own comment above, p.19 n.67. Giddens (1984), p.24 makes clear the limits of the analogy; "When I produce a grammatical utterance, I draw upon the same syntactical rules as those that utterance helps to produce. But I speak the 'same' language as the other speakers in my language community; we all share the same rules and linguistic practices, give or take a range of relatively minor variations. Such is not necessarily the case with the structural properties of social systems in general."

[115]Giddens (1982), p.37. Also quoted by Horrell (1996), pp.47-48.

[116]Giddens (1976), p.128. Also quoted by Horrell (1996), p.49.

[117]One should note that this balance between reproduction and transformation serves to make clear the historical nature of sociology as a discipline. That the two occur simultaneously makes the location of social practices in time-space crucial to their analysis.

space. Human action occurs as a *durée*, a continuous flow of conduct, as does cognition."[118]

1.4.2.3 Structuration Theory: Practical Consciousness

Giddens explains the way in which rules and resources structure the ongoing flow of social life using the concept of practical consciousness. In most social interactions, the humans involved share a huge amount of mutual knowledge, much of it concerning the 'rules' and 'resources' (social structures) upon which they have learnt to draw in maintaining appropriate and competent behaviour in whichever particular context they are located. Most of the time, this knowledge is purely implicit, and people are unaware of it unless questioned about it. This is rare, since such questions are usually provoked only by a lapse or fracture in competency. Human beings know how to behave, but they only focus on that fact when an individual behaves in a way which demonstrates that they do not share such knowledge. Put succinctly, if a little crudely, Giddens' point is that most of the time human beings operate on a sort of social auto-pilot. It is this auto-pilot which he terms practical consciousness.

Practical consciousness works by the monitoring of conduct. Lapses of competence are noticed. Yet, the fact that awareness of the 'rules' and 'resources' (structures) of social life usually only surfaces when provoked by such lapses, points to the particular character of the monitoring of conduct which they entail. In the following quotation, the key concept is that of 'reflexivity', a term by which Giddens appears to intend something of a synthesis between the grammatical term implying the action of a subject upon itself, and the automatic quality of conduct implied by the phrase 'reflex action':

> "Human social activities ...are recursive ...It is the specifically reflexive form of the knowledgeability of human agents that is most deeply involved in the recursive

[118]Giddens (1984), p.3.

> ordering of social practices. Continuity of practices presumes reflexivity, but reflexivity in turn is possible only because of the continuity of practices that makes them distinctively the same across space and time. 'Reflexivity' hence should be understood not merely as 'self-consciousness' but as the monitored character of the ongoing flow of social life.....Purposive life is not composed of an aggregate or series of separate intentions, reasons and motives. Thus it is useful to speak of reflexivity as grounded in the continuous monitoring of action which human beings display and expect others to display."[119]

On the one hand, the reflexive monitoring of conduct is something which human beings do to themselves but, on the other, it is not self-conscious. It is not formulated mentally into definite separate intentions, reasons, motives etc.

This largely implicit nature means that practical consciousness occupies a position between that of discursive consciousness and the unconscious. "The vast bulk of....the mutual knowledge incorporated in encounters, is not directly accessible to the consciousness of the actors. Most such knowledge is practical in character: it is inherent in the ability to 'go on' with the routines of social life. The line between discursive and practical consciousness is fluctuating and permeable, both in the experience of the individual agent and as regards comparisons between actors in different contexts of social activity. There is no bar between these, however, as there is between the unconscious and discursive consciousness."[120] Thus, human beings exhibit discursive consciousness, practical consciousness, and the unconscious; and it is the second of these three, practical consciousness, which is especially crucial to social life. It is practical consciousness which grants social life its repetitious character, and permits the development of social systems (repeated social practices strung across varying spans of space and time).

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[119]Giddens (1984), pp. 2-3.
[120]Giddens (1984), p. 4.

1.4.2.4 The Potential Benefits of Structuration Theory

For the student of conversion, the value of the concept of practical consciousness is that it allows us to register the communal dimension of conversion, especially in its impact on behaviour through the repeated social practices established by communities. Conversion means not just that there are many new things to be learnt at the level of discursive consciousness, but also a new set of implicit rules and resources (structures) to be acquired shaping appropriate and competent conduct in a host of contexts. In conversion, perhaps to a greater degree than in many other forms of social activity, these social structures are laid open to transformation. Yet, it must be remembered, this does not eliminate their reproduction for, without an element of reproduction, social activity could not be interpreted. The recursive nature of social life is essential to human ability to make sense of it. The way is therefore open to an exploration of conversion which operates partially in terms of a dialectic between reproduction and transformation. In relation to Paul's own understanding of conversion we shall ask which areas of his converts' practical consciousness he expects to have been transformed by conversion? Are these the same or different with regard to Gentiles and Jews? In relation to the Corinthians' understanding of conversion similar questions are prompted. Do Paul's expectations as to the impact of conversion upon practical consciousness conform to that which we can deduce about those of the Corinthians? Are the transformations of practical consciousness which they desired, and experienced, more or less radical than those desired by Paul? If there are differences, which factors in the Corinthians' cultural context might be influencing them?

In what follows, I attempt to use such questions with lightness of touch, in line with Giddens' own desire that "the concepts of structuration theory, as with any competing theoretical perspective, should for many research purposes be regarded as sensitising devices, nothing more. That is, they may be useful for thinking about research

problems and the interpretation of research results."[121] Nevertheless, sensitisation is a not insignificant function, particularly in relation to a project where one of the lessons of other studies is that there is a considerable danger of unduly neglecting either the activity of the individual or the role of the community. By successfully conceptualising human agency, and yet, through the concepts of practical consciousness and social structures, embedding that agency in the ongoing flow of social life, structuration theory inevitably directs attention to both. The individual acts but, in doing so, is always both enabled and restrained by the existing rules and resources of social life.

Finally, I hope that structuration theory, itself so concerned to turn dualisms into dualities, will assist me to do something similar. In his discussion of social-scientific approaches to New Testament study, Horrell cites Giddens, among others, in support of the view that there are no legitimate methodological distinctions between sociology and history.[122] In contrast, John Elliott's discussion of the same subject is largely organised around sharp distinctions between historical and social-scientific criticism. One of the distinctions he draws is that whereas the former deals with "religion, theology as phenomenon distinct from politics and kinship,"[123] the latter deals with "relations of beliefs to social system (ideology); embeddedness of beliefs in politics and kinship."[124] While this is a broadly accurate description of what has actually happened within New Testament study, I consider the distinction a false one. It is a cause for regret that so many studies can be neatly categorised as either concerned with Pauline theology or with the social life of his communities. My hope is that this thesis will not lend itself to such easy classification. In Paul's letters we find a passionate concern for the relationship between human beings and God. This passion is such that, even when asking questions which are of themselves perfectly legitimate, to consistently interpret the evidence

[121]Giddens (1984), pp.326-27. Also quoted by Horrell (1996), p.45. Giddens continues: "But to suppose that being theoretically informed - which it is the business of everyone working in the social sciences to be in some degree - means always operating with a welter of abstract concepts is as mischievous a doctrine as one which suggests that we can get along very well without ever using such concepts at all."
[122]Horrell (1996), pp.26-31.
[123]Elliott, J. (1995), p.109.
[124]ibid.

offered by his letters without reference to it is ultimately an act of distortion. Yet equally, we also find no evidence that this passion exists independently of social life in general, or that of the early Christian communities in particular. The one is bound up with the other, and, however inadequately, I wish to express that intimate connection. Theological approaches to Paul can also be sociological and vice versa.

PART 2

PAUL'S UNDERSTANDING OF CONVERSION

2

Conversion and Soteriology

2.1 Dominant Trends in the Analysis of Paul's Soteriology

Anyone now engaged in a study of Pauline soteriology works in the aftermath of a revolution. In the last twenty years the previously dominant view, that Paul stressed faith in Christ in opposition to the emphasis of Judaism on salvation by works, has been overturned. The driving force behind this revolution was not so much a re-interpretation of Paul's letters, as the recognition that to describe first century Judaism as simply teaching salvation by self-satisfied human effort is a distortion.[1] Completely discredited is Bultmann's depiction of a Judaism characterised by "the self-reliant attitude of the man who puts his trust in his own strength and in that which is controllable by him."[2] In its place stands a Judaism fully aware that its covenant relationship with God is based upon divine grace, and that its obedience to God's law is simply a response to that grace. But how, then, are we to read Paul? Against what is he reacting when he contrasts his own teaching on faith with that of Jewish Christian opponents?

E.P. Sanders, the principal agent of the revolution, offers a clear-cut explanation. "*This is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity.*"[3] By this Sanders means that in accepting Christ as saviour, Paul has simply shifted to another pattern of religion. Paul rejects the law, the covenant and election as means of salvation not because it is impossible to observe the whole law, or because Jewish attempts to do so have been corrupted by self-righteousness, but on the grounds that if Judaism could

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[1]A different reading of Paul then followed. This order of events is clearly demonstrated by even a cursory inspection of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism.* In this seminal work Sanders devotes the first 430 pages to Judaism, but a mere 150 or so to Paul. The latter is read in light of the former. Dunn (1998), p.339 says of Sanders that "in the light of the new perspective on Second Temple Judaism he could only see an incoherent and inconsistent Paul."

[2]Bultmann (ET 1952), p.240.

[3]Sanders (1977), p.552. His italics.

bring salvation then the sending of Christ was pointless.[4] It is what Paul now believes about Christ which determines his attitude towards Judaism, not dissatisfaction with Judaism which leads him towards Christ. Similarly, Paul's view that humanity needs Christ as its saviour follows from his belief that Christ is its saviour. "Paul's thought did not run from plight to solution, but from solution to plight ...the conclusion that all the world - both Jew and Greek - equally stands in need of a saviour *springs from* the prior conviction that God had provided such a saviour. If he did so it follows that such a saviour *must* have been needed."[5] Here lie the roots of Paul's portrayal of sin as the plight from which humanity required deliverance, and here too an indication of which elements of his theology are most important. Righteousness by faith, understood within the Lutheran tradition as central to Paul's thought, "serves primarily as a negative argument against keeping the law as sufficient or necessary for salvation."[6] It is also a reflex of the view that Christ is the saviour. Used by Paul as a transfer term, righteousness by faith sometimes bears a 'forensic' sense,[7] but more frequently a participationist one. Thus, righteousness by faith "is not any one doctrine,"[8] and "Paul is not primarily concerned with the juristic categories, although he works with them. The real bite of his theology lies in the participatory categories."[9]

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[4]Sanders (1983), p.27: "Paul has a view of God's intention which excludes righteousness by the law; his position is dogmatic ...God sent Christ; he did so in order to offer righteousness; this would have been pointless if righteousness were already available by the law (Gal. 2:21); the law was not given to bring righteousness (Gal. 3:21). That the positive statement about righteousness through Christ grounds the negative one about the law seems to be self-evident."

[5]Sanders (1977), p.443. His italics.

[6]Sanders (1977), p.492.

[7]Inverted commas are placed around the term 'forensic', both here and subsequently, in order to indicate when it is being used in line with Sanders' own somewhat unusual definition. Refusing to allow that Paul's notion of righteousness includes any element of imputation, Sanders takes forensic righteousness to denote the forgiveness of past transgressions through Christ's atoning sacrifice. This contrasts with Paul's participatory use of righteousness to denote deliverance from the power of sin. See Sanders (1977), p.492 n.57. Since 'forensic' is here primarily defined using the ideas of forgiveness and sacrifice, not every instance of 'forensic' righteousness identified by Sanders involves the use of legal imagery. See below, p.121 n.37.

[8]Sanders (1977), p.492.

[9]Sanders (1977), p.502.

Sanders' presentation of a Paul utterly clear in his insistence that salvation comes through Christ, but somewhat arbitrary in his application of this conviction to Judaism, has not found favour with all who accept his re-reading of Second Temple Judaism. An alternative understanding of Paul's soteriology has been developed by J.D.G. Dunn, who rejects Sanders' view that righteousness by faith is primarily intended by Paul to mark, in various ways, the transfer from the plight of sinful humanity to its solution in Christ. Instead, Dunn argues that "the doctrine of justification by faith was formulated within and as a result of the early mission to Gentiles. It was a polemical doctrine, hammered out in the face of Jewish Christian objections to that mission as law-free and not requiring circumcision. 'Justification by faith' was Paul's answer to the question: How is it that Gentiles can be equally acceptable to God as Jews?"[10] Dunn thus restores the unity of justification by faith,[11] but without returning to the Reformation understanding of faith in Christ as standing in direct opposition to good works done as an attempt to gain or achieve righteousness.

Paul's phrase, 'the works of the law,' does refer to all that the law requires, but in a context like the Gentile mission where the relationship of Israel to other nations was at stake, some issues were more sensitive than others. Dunn identifies circumcision, food laws and Sabbath observance as key identity markers which Jews understood as demonstrating their separation from the nations and their loyalty to the covenant.[12] By arguing that Gentiles could be acceptable to God simply through faith in Christ without performing such works of the law, Paul challenges central aspects of Jewish identity and finds fault with contemporary Judaism on grounds other simply than its failure to be Christianity. For Paul, his Jewish Christian opponents' affirmation of justification by works "is tantamount to saying 'God is God of Jews only.'"[13] Judaism has

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[10]Dunn (1998), p.340.
[11]ibid. Dunn here repeatedly speaks of justification by faith as a doctrine.
[12]See Dunn (1998), pp.354-66.
[13]Dunn (1998), p.363.

gone astray through an ethnocentric identification of righteousness with Jewish identity, and "the 'works' which Paul consistently warns against were, in his view, Israel's misunderstandings of what her covenant law required ...furthermore, that misunderstanding meant a misunderstanding of God and God's promised (covenanted) intention to bless also the nations."[14] Rather than, as in Sanders' reading, rejecting the covenant as a means of salvation, Dunn's Paul is the one who understands the covenant and gives it expression.[15] Sanders draws the sting of Paul's criticism of Judaism by asserting the discontinuity between Paul and Israel's heritage (Paul has switched to a different pattern of religion); Dunn chooses instead to emphasise continuity between the two, and in doing so reinstates the force of the criticism, although aiming it against the misdirection of Judaism rather than against Judaism *per se*.

Underlying both these readings of Paul lies the earlier work of Krister Stendahl, who made the crucial exegetical point that there was little evidence on which to base the long cherished assumption that the pre-Christian Paul had struggled with a guilty conscience. Far from being introspective, "Paul was equipped with what in our eyes must be called a rather 'robust' conscience. In Phil. 3 Paul speaks most fully about his life before his Christian calling, and there is no indication that he had any difficulty in fulfilling the law."[16] Stendahl thus provided the basis upon which Sanders was able to argue that Paul worked from solution to plight, since Paul himself had experienced Christ as solution before he had ever recognised his plight. Further, Stendahl emphasised the continuity between Paul and Israel's heritage by speaking of Paul not as a convert, but as one who had been called to be an apostle. He also insisted that "justification by faith was hammered out by Paul for the very specific and limited purpose of defending the rights of

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[14]Dunn (1998), p.366.
[15]This remains a difference between them although, in defining Paul's grounds for rejecting Judaism, Sanders (1983), p.47 moved closer to Dunn: "What is wrong with the law, and thus with Judaism, is that it does not provide for God's ultimate purpose, that of saving the entire world through faith in Christ, and without the privilege accorded to Jews through the promises, the covenants, and the law."
[16]Stendahl (1976, original 1963), p.80.

Gentile converts to be full and genuine heirs to the promises of God to Israel."[17] It is not difficult to see here an anticipation of several of Dunn's emphases. Yet Stendahl's Paul does not have a developed critique of Judaism. Justification by faith is an apologetic rather than a polemical doctrine.[18] Like Sanders, Stendahl refuses to reach judgements as to the superiority or inferiority of Paul or Judaism.[19]

Stendahl thus appears as a highly significant forerunner of the dramatic shift in the understanding of Paul's soteriology which followed the publication of Sanders' *Paul and Palestinian Judaism.* Much earlier still, but no less influential, were the works of William Wrede and Albert Schweitzer. As early as 1904, Wrede had asserted that "the soul-strivings of Luther have stood as a model for the portrait of Paul."[20] The apostle's teaching on justification by faith did not derive from his own religious experience but from two polemical purposes: "(1) the mission must be free from the burden of Jewish national custom; (2) the superiority of the Christian faith in redemption over Judaism must be assured."[21] These purposes apart, justification is not of central importance for Paul, and his soteriology should be understood primarily in terms of participation in the death of Christ and the indwelling of the Spirit.[22] For Paul, faith is simply the means by which the individual appropriates what Christ has accomplished for humanity as a whole: "the history of salvation is the content of his faith."[23] Schweitzer disagrees with Wrede to the extent that he does not regard the practicalities of mission as having a significant impact upon Paul. Instead, Paul rejects the law because he, unlike others, thinks through systematically the relationship between Christ's death and his

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[17]Stendahl (1976), p.2.
[18]See Stendahl (1976), p.130. At this point Dunn's debt is not to Stendahl, but rather to F.C. Baur, who had emphasised that the target of the formulation justification by faith was the restriction of God's blessing to Jews. See Dunn (1998), pp.339-40, and Baur (ET 1875) Vol.II, chapters 1-3.
[19]See Sanders (1977), p.552 and Stendahl (1976), p.4 who reads Romans 9-11 as "an affirmation of a God-willed coexistence between Judaism and Christianity in which the missionary urge to convert Israel is held in check."
[20]Wrede (ET 1907), p.146.
[21]Wrede (ET 1907), p.127.
[22]See Wrede (ET 1907), pp.102-09.
[23]Wrede (ET 1907), p.115.

typically Jewish eschatology. Now that the new age has dawned the law is redundant, for those who die with Christ also die to the law. This means that there is no need to root Paul's soteriology in his own experience,[24] and that at the heart of his thought lies the mystical doctrine of being-in-Christ. Righteousness by faith appears only when Paul is disputing with those who believe in a righteousness by the law, and he does not derive his ethics from it. "The doctrine of righteousness by faith is therefore a subsidiary crater, which has formed within the rim of the main crater - the mystical doctrine of redemption through the being-in-Christ."[25]

Between all of the scholars discussed above there are significant differences of opinion. Yet their views on Paul contain several common features which make it possible to speak of a constellation of readings. These common features are:

(i) Although the particular terminology is that of Sanders, all would agree that Paul worked from solution to plight. His theology of sin is not rooted in his own conversion experience, nor his insistence on justification by faith. Indeed, Paul's experience holds little significance for his theology in general.[26]

(ii) In negative terms, all are agreed as to what is not the central theme in Paul's theology. The greatest degree of emphasis is placed either on participation in Christ, or on salvation history (the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's people), but not on forensic terminology. Even if the importance of justification by faith is maintained, it is defined in other ways. Paul uses legal imagery, but it is not of crucial importance to him.

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[24]Schweitzer (ET 1912), p.105: "How do we know that Paul when he was still a persecutor of the Christians was suffering inward distress from his experiences of the powerlessness of the law?"
[25]Schweitzer (ET 1931), p.225.
[26]A partial exception here is Dunn who, although he regards justification by faith as a doctrine formulated primarily as a result of the early mission to the Gentiles and not as a result of Paul's experience, does acknowledge that Paul's attacks on Jewish ethnocentrism reverse his earlier zeal to maintain the boundaries of Israel. See Dunn (1998), pp.346-54.

(iii) Although the significance of Paul's gospel for the individual is acknowledged, this is a subsidiary level of Paul's thought. In contrast to Bultmann's concentration on the revision of the individual's existential self-understanding of his or her position before God, it is the communal and/or cosmic levels of Paul's thought which receive emphasis.[27]

2.2 Critical Issues and Questions

That the 'new' interpretation of Paul should turn out to have antecedents in such venerable works as those of Wrede and Schweitzer reinforces a point already made above. The now dominant readings of Paul stem not in the first instance from a re-interpretation of Paul's letters, but from a re-interpretation of Second Temple Judaism in the light of which Paul is then read.[28] It is this re-interpretation of Judaism which renders plausible readings of Paul which were once those of a decided minority.[29] A central issue for the understanding of Paul's soteriology is therefore whether this re-interpretation of Judaism is credible. Here I am in substantial agreement with Stephen Westerholm. In *Israel's Law and the Church's Faith*, Westerholm finds Sanders' account of Judaism only partially convincing. Although Judaism acknowledges and even emphasises covenant grace, "observance of the law may be regarded as Israel's path to life."[30] Paul himself agrees that were it possible to do so, the law promises life to those who observe its commands, and "if Paul is wrong in considering the law a path to

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[27]Here Käsemann was the agent of change, challenging Bultmann's emphasis on anthropology and asserting (ET 1971), p.23 that "neither the exegetical nor the theological findings allow what the apostle calls the universe to be reduced to the world of men." Sanders (1977), p.547 theoretically grants equal significance to both the individual and the social levels of analysis: "*both Judaism and Paul take full account of the individual and the group*" (his italics). However, Sanders' own lack of interest in exploring Paul's individual experience, and his insistence, pp.522-23, that what Paul meant by participation in Christ is beyond our grasp, has helped to direct subsequent research away from the individual level.

[28]See above, p.41 n.1

[29]Sanders (1977), p.434: "Schweitzer has been ignored in much of German Protestant scholarship, which constitutes the most influential single body of scholarship on Paul." Sanders makes full acknowledgement of his own debts to Schweitzer.

[30]Westerholm (1988), p.142.

salvation, it is an error he shares with Leviticus, Deuteronomy and Ezekiel."[31] The fundamental disagreement between Paul and Judaism is not that he stresses faith and grace whereas Judaism excludes these in favour of works, but that Judaism has not despaired of human capacity to respond to God's grace by obeying the law. Paul has done so, and he therefore "attributes salvation to divine grace to the exclusion of any role by human works in a way which is not typical of Judaism. And the tenet that justification is by faith alone is both necessary to Paul and pointless from the perspective of Judaism."[32]

On this reading Paul does, as in Lutheran interpretations, contrast salvation by human works with salvation by faith alone, the latter providing the answer to the problem of sin. Yet Judaism is not caricatured as a religion of work-righteousness. "The methodological error has often been committed in the past of concluding that, since Paul contrasts grace and works and argues for salvation by grace, his opponents (and ultimately, Judaism) must have worked with the same distinction but argued for salvation by works. Clearly this distorts Judaism, which never thought that divine grace was incompatible with divine requirements."[33] The opposition between faith and works is Paul's own insight which "takes as its starting-point faith in a crucified messiah. The evidence of the epistles does not support the view that Paul, before his encounter with the risen Christ, was tormented by an inability to keep the law."[34] Westerholm thus recognises that Paul works from solution to plight, but apparently does not find it

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[31]Westerholm (1988), p.147. See Lev. 18:5; Deut. 4:1, 5:33, 6:24-25, 8:1, 30:15-18; Ezek. 18:19, 20:11; Neh. 9:29.

[32]Westerholm (1988), p.142. For similar positions see Riches (1993), pp.136-38; Segal (1990), pp.125-33; Seifrid (1992), chapter 2.

[33]Westerholm (1988), p.149. For Räisänen (1987a), p.200 this is an acceptable account of Paul, but would remain something of a caricature of Judaism: "Apparently Paul misconstrues Jewish 'soteriology', ignoring the pattern of gratuity on which it was based as well as the role accorded to man's repentance." But this implies that (i) soteriologies cannot be mixed, and that (ii) grace is self-evidently superior to works. See James 2:14-26 for a soteriology which quite clearly combines grace and works, and Wrede (ET 1907), pp.129-30 for the suggestion that works are morally superior to grace. Where Westerholm and Räisänen would agree is in regarding Sanders' account of Judaism and the content of Paul's letters as incompatible.

[34]Westerholm (1988), p.220.

necessary to draw from this Sanders' conclusion that Paul has no critique of Judaism beyond its failure to be Christianity. What Westerholm does not do is offer any explanation as to the origin of Paul's critique. If Paul did move from solution to plight, then how did he arrive at his opposition between faith and works? Further, although his views on justification and grace might be thought to imply the centrality of forensic categories for Paul, Westerholm does not discuss this, or the relationship between these categories and those of participation in Christ and salvation history. Similarly, while Westerholm's position might be thought to imply that questions of individual salvation are vital to Paul, this and its implications for the communal and cosmic levels of Paul's thought are not discussed.[35]

In the following exploration of Paul's understanding of conversion, I attempt to support Westerholm's general position by exploring these under-discussed areas in his own work. I have the following questions particularly in mind:

(i) If Paul does work from solution to plight, and yet his theology of sin is not to be understood merely as a reflex of his faith in Christ as saviour, what is its origin? Can either it, or Paul's insistence on justification by faith, still be attributed to the influence of his conversion experience?

(ii) Are forensic categories really of little importance to Paul? Must the dominant emphasis in recent scholarship on participation in Christ, and/or the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God, be at the expense of the forensic?

(iii) Does Paul share the modern perception that to place emphasis on certain levels of analysis is to remove it from others? Does it follow that if the communal

[35]The discussion of Romans in Westerholm (1997) seems in many places to imply the inter-connectedness of all three levels in Paul's thought, but the point is never explicitly made.

and cosmic levels of his thought were important to Paul, the faith of the individual must have been less so?

I believe that approaching these issues through an analysis of Paul's understanding of conversion offers a distinct advantage. For to one like Paul, who devoted his life to winning and sustaining converts, soteriology was not an abstract or theoretical issue. Conversion is, as it were, soteriology in action. By asking how he expected conversion to take place, and what he expected its consequences to be, concrete form is given to the contours of Paul's soteriology. Those elements which prove to be important answers to these questions are therefore also important elements in Paul's soteriology. To claim this is not to claim comprehensiveness. There are important elements in Paul's understanding of conversion and in his soteriology on which the following discussion does not comment. There is little on christology not because christology is unimportant, but because it is difficult to see how christology can account for that which is distinctive to Paul. The very controversy which Paul's views on conversion attracted in his own day illustrates the point, since many others who shared his faith in Christ came to different conclusions. Sanders' proposal, that Paul rejected the law simply because not to do so would render the coming of Christ unnecessary, lacks credibility precisely because many other Jewish Christians did not perceive the two as mutually exclusive. An explanation is still required of why Paul is different. Similarly, some of Paul's most striking images of conversion receive little attention. The participatory images of the new creation (καινὴ κτίσις),[36] of being conformed to Christ (συμμορφός),[37] of being transformed into his likeness (μεταμορφωσίς),[38] of being joined to him (κολλάω),[39] and of being united with him (συμφύω),[40] are not discussed. This is not because they, or participation in Christ, are unimportant, although

[36]Gal. 6:15, 2 Cor. 5:17.
[37]Rom. 8:29; Phil. 3:10, 3:21.
[38]Rom. 12:2, Phil. 3:21
[39]Rom. 12:9, 1 Cor. 6:17
[40]Rom. 6:5.

Paul does use these images relatively infrequently, but because their significance is not an issue at stake between myself and those scholars with whom I am in dialogue.[41] I am not attempting to diminish the importance of participation in Christ.

However, I am questioning some common assumptions as to the relationship between different elements in Paul's soteriology. In regard to the significance of Paul's own conversion I am testing the assumption, common since Stendahl, that if prior to his conversion Paul did have a robust conscience, and if he did therefore work from solution to plight, his experience cannot lie at the root of his theology of sin or his insistence on justification by faith. Does the latter really follow from the former? As for participation in Christ itself, I am testing the assumption that if it is accorded significance, then that accorded to forensic categories must diminish. While these two tracks are undoubtedly present in Paul's thought,[42] does separating them and playing them off against each other or, indeed, against salvation history, assist us in our attempts to understand him?[43] Here I pay some attention to the work of Ernst Käsemann, who instead attempts to allow the different elements of Paul's theology to interpret each other.[44] Can following this procedure help to produce credible readings of specific

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[41]For a discussion of this imagery see Segal (1990), pp.20-30, 58-71.

[42]The identification of these two tracks dates back to 1853 and the work of R.A. Lipsius. Schweitzer (ET 1912), p.19: "Lipsius is the first to recognise the two trains of thought in Paulinism and to remark that one is based upon the juridical idea of justification, while the other has its starting-point in the conception of sanctification - of the real ethical new creation by the Spirit."

[43]Käsemann (ET 1969), pp.171-72: "He (Paul) managed to combine present and future eschatology, 'declare righteous' and 'make righteous', gift and service, freedom and obedience, forensic, sacramental and ethical approaches ...if particular aspects of the question are made into absolutes, as has frequently happened, the Pauline dialectic is destroyed." See also (ET 1971), pp.65-66: "It has always been a characteristic of Pauline interpretation in Germany ...to postulate alternatives which destroy the apostle's dialectical treatment of the facts. It is no comfort that in English-speaking countries something similar came about under different omens. There the church is not infrequently played off against the individual, sacrament against faith, liturgy against *kerygma*, ethics against eschatology, the gospels against Paul and, in the same way, salvation history against the doctrine of justification."

[44]Way (1991), p.210: "This is a very unusual approach, and has not been widely or fully understood." Käsemann has sometimes been erroneously discussed and criticised as if he simply merges various terms and themes in Paul's thought, whereas what he actually seeks is a dialectic between them. From one side of the debate Seifrid (1992), p.45 feels that in interpreting justification by faith by participation in Christ, Käsemann unhelpfully renders the forensic elements subsidiary; while from the other, Sanders (1977), p.438 n.41 is naturally in sympathy with the attempt to interpret righteousness by faith using participatory concepts, but then cannot understand why Käsemann continues to attach such importance to justification. My own criticism of Käsemann relates not to this procedure, but to his assumption that

passages?[45] For example, by juxtaposing terms and ideas suggestive of forensic justification with those suggestive of participation in Christ, does Paul himself allow the forensic and the participatory elements of his thought to interpret each other? Similarly, in relation to the different levels of Paul's thought, I am testing the assumption that a recognition of the importance of the cosmic and the communal implies a reduction in the significance of individual faith. Must one be played off against the other? Here lies one of the benefits of my use of structuration theory,[46] for the concept of practical consciousness is a particularly appropriate analytical tool with which to pursue this question. Possessed by the individual, but shaped by shared understanding of what constitutes competent behaviour in myriad recursive social circumstances, practical consciousness privileges neither the individual nor the communal levels of analysis. In asking which elements of his converts' practical consciousness Paul expects to have been transformed by conversion, and in asking whether these expectations were the same with regard to both Jews and Gentiles, I am employing questions which sensitise one to evidence relating to both levels.

My questioning of common assumptions in these three areas provides themes which run throughout part 2 of the thesis. Each is more prominent in some chapters than others, but none is irrelevant to any chapter. One chapter (**3**) is devoted to a survey of Paul's use of the group of cognate terms (καλέω, κλῆσις, κλητός) which conceive conversion as a divine calling. This is the vocabulary which Paul uses more frequently than almost any other to denote conversion.[47] One of the key issues here is

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justification so interpreted forms the unifying centre of Paul's thought. I would prefer to speak of a number of central themes which Paul uses to interpret each other.

[45]Way (1991), p.201 offers the criticism that Käsemann fails to provide detailed exegesis of specific passages in support of his claim that the righteousness of God is both gift and power.

[46]For a discussion of structuration theory, see **1.4.2**. It is also fair to note that the spirit of structuration theory has played a part in shaping the questions with which I approach Paul's soteriology. Just as structuration theory is concerned to turn dualisms into dualities (both agency and social structure, both human freedom and external constraint, both continuity and change), so I am concerned to ask whether, in terms of the importance accorded to them, we must choose either solution or plight, either forensic or participatory categories, either the individual or the communal level of analysis.

[47]See below, p.54 n.2.

whether Paul describes the calling of all in the same way, and this helps to set the stage for the following two chapters, which discuss Gentile conversion (**4**) and Jewish conversion (**5**) respectively. Placed next to each other, these two discussions enable an assessment of the similarities and differences between what Paul has to say about Gentile and Jewish conversion. The chapter on Gentile conversion discusses selected passages from 1 Corinthians which reveal Paul's expectations as to how his converts in Corinth were converted, and as to the consequences of their being so. That on Jewish conversion explores passages from various of Paul's letters, and focuses on his self-understanding as a Jew who has come to believe in Christ, again asking what he understands about how his conversion took place, and what he understands about its consequences.

3

God's Converting Call: Paul's use of καλέω

3.1 Introduction

Paul rarely employs terms which could legitimately be translated into English using 'conversion' or a cognate term.[1] Indeed, he does not seem to distinguish between beginning the Christian life, remaining within it, and completing it, in quite the sharp manner which seems to be natural in our modern western setting. When describing Christian identity, he applies some terms to the past, present and future of people's Christian lives; others belong predominantly to one of these phases, but rarely exclusively so. It is therefore little surprise also to find that when referring to conversion, Paul uses a variety of terms to denote the beginning of the Christian life. He does not describe conversion in a single way. He does, however, use some terms to describe conversion more frequently than others, and one of the most frequently used is the group of cognate terms which conceive conversion as the receipt of a divine calling.[2] Out of 27 appearances, the verb καλέω is used in the aorist tense 14 times,[3] and in the perfect tense a further 3 times,[4] when it denotes the present state of being called but does so on

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[1]The English verb 'to convert' derives from the Latin *convertere*, the basic meaning of which is 'to turn around.' One could therefore use it to translate the Greek ἐπιστρέφω, 'to turn back to' or 'to turn towards', and perhaps in some cases μετανοέω, 'to change one's mind,' or 'to repent'. Paul never uses the latter to refer to anyone coming to be in Christ, and the former only twice. See Gaventa (1986b), p.40f. and 1 Thess. 1:9-10, 2 Cor. 3:15-16.

[2]Other major cognate groups are πιστεύω (42 uses), πίστις (86), πιστός (21) and δικαιόω (25), δικαιοσύνη (14), δικαίως (2). Such frequent use means that, assessed as terms expressing Christian identity in general, either of these groups might be thought more important to Paul than καλέω κτλ. However, δικαιόω is used to refer back to conversion less frequently than καλέω, and while πιστεύω is used to do so an identical number of times, this is a smaller proportion of its total number of uses than in the case of καλέω. 15 of the 42 appearances of πιστεύω are in the aorist tense, and 2 in the perfect, while in the case of δικαιόω, 12 of the 25 appearances of the verb are aorist. Another verb which one might have expected to figure prominently with reference to conversion is σῴζω, but out of 20 uses it occurs only twice in the aorist tense (Rom. 8:24, 1 Cor. 1:21), i.e., Paul does not often use it to refer to someone coming to be in Christ.

[3]Rom. 8:30(2), Rom. 9:24, 1 Cor. 1:9, 1 Cor. 7:18, 1 Cor. 7:20, 1 Cor. 7:21, 1 Cor. 7:22(2), 1 Cor. 7:24, Gal. 1:6, Gal. 1:15, Gal. 5:13, 1 Thess. 4:7.

[4]1 Cor. 7:15, 1 Cor. 7:17, 1 Cor. 7:18.

the basis of God's past action.[5] These 17 references back to the beginning of the Christian life make καλέω the only verb used by Paul which refers directly to conversion in a majority of cases. We therefore begin our attempt to probe Paul's understanding of conversion by examining this vocabulary of calling.

As noted above, the verb καλέω appears 27 times in the seven generally accepted letters of Paul, although in one instance (1 Cor. 10:27) it carries one of its most common meanings in ancient society, that of an invitation to a meal or a party, and this usage can be discarded from consideration. In addition to the remaining 26 uses of the verb,[6] the noun κλῆσις appears 4 times,[7] and the adjective κλητός 7 times,[8] thus giving a total of 37 occurrences of καλέω κτλ. relevant to our investigation. There is a definite pattern to these occurrences, with 16 uses in 1 Corinthians, 13 in Romans, 4 in Galatians, 3 in 1 Thessalonians, and 1 in Philippians. The concentration of 29 uses in 1 Corinthians and Romans is striking, and dictates that in what follows our attention is mainly directed at these two epistles. Given the very different themes addressed in these two epistles, this concentration seems significant in itself, indicating that Paul does not only use the concept of calling in relation to a single issue or aspect of church life.[9]

This breadth of usage raises the question of breadth of meaning. If it is true that in contemporary usage καλέω bore two basic senses, one of which is 'name, designate, give a title to', and the other of which is 'summon, invite',[10] then is it the case

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[5]Of the remaining 9 uses of the verb, 6 are in the present tense, and 3 in the future. However, all of the latter are scripture quotations, i.e., as far as Paul is concerned they all refer to what has now come to pass through his ministry.

[6]Rom. 4:17, Rom. 8:30(2), Rom. 9:7, Rom. 9:12, Rom. 9:24, Rom. 9:25, Rom. 9:26, 1 Cor. 1:9, 1 Cor. 7:15, 1 Cor. 7:17, 1 Cor. 7:18(2), 1 Cor. 7:20, 1 Cor. 7:21, 1 Cor. 7:22(2), 1 Cor. 7:24, 1 Cor. 15:9, Gal. 1:6, Gal. 1:15, Gal. 5:8, Gal. 5:13, 1 Thess. 2:12, 1 Thess. 4:7, 1 Thess. 5:24.

[7]Rom. 11:29, 1 Cor. 1:26, 1 Cor. 7:20, Phil. 3:14.

[8]Rom. 1:1, Rom. 1:6, Rom. 1:7, Rom. 8:28, 1 Cor. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:2, 1 Cor. 1:24.

[9]In particular, Jew/Gentile questions and the issue of the law vs. faith in Christ dominate Romans, but this is not true of 1 Corinthians. Calling is not a concept which Paul only or predominantly employs when the integrity of his law-free Gentile mission is at stake.

[10]See Klein (1984), p.53.

that Paul must primarily intend one or the other? Could his meaning be broader than either of these categories alone would allow? Taking my cue from structuration theory's emphasis that transformation is at hand in every act of reproduction, I am concerned to explore whether Paul's usage not only reflects previous and contemporary ones, but, in addition, develops the meaning of calling in distinctive ways. Once again drawing from structuration theory, I am also concerned to explore the potential impact of Paul's concept of calling upon the practical consciousness of his converts. He most frequently uses καλέω κτλ. with regard to status on being called, and with regard to the new role/identity created by that calling.[11] This is suggestive, for it may indicate that Paul's focus is on the before and after of calling, from what and to what, rather than on the event itself. In terms of the general questions with which I approach the subject of conversion (**1.4.1**), this vocabulary is concerned less with how conversion takes place than with its consequences. For if by calling them God changes who people are, granting them a new identity, then behavioural consequences may follow in many areas of life. An approach which seeks to discover the impact of calling upon practical consciousness is therefore one which offers a potentially close fit with the evidence available to us. It could offer little in terms of exploring the event itself, but it can help to analyse change, the calling from what and to what, with which Paul's use of καλέω κτλ. seems predominantly concerned. As Paul discusses his converts' calling in terms of changes to their identity, he provides raw materials with which they may construct a new set of implicit rules and resources governing appropriate and competent conduct in a host of contexts.[12]

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[11]See the classification of Paul's use of καλέω κτλ. in **Appendix 1**.

[12]It may sound odd to talk of the construction of practical consciousness having defined it as something implicit and reflexive. See **1.4.2.3**. Yet it should be remembered that Giddens is careful to distinguish practical consciousness from the unconscious, while emphasising that the line between the two is fluctuating and permeable. See Giddens (1984), pp.2-4. Further, practical consciousness is as much subject to the dualities of continuity and change, and of agency and constraint, as any other feature of social life. This can be illustrated in the academic field by the number of scholars who now unhesitatingly use inclusive language but never did so twenty years ago. An aspect of their practical consciousness has been reconstructed.

Yet the all-embracing nature of practical consciousness, its reflexive monitoring across space and time of the ongoing flow of social life in all its forms, means that it can scarcely be addressed to the available evidence in the form of a single question. Similarly, the issue of meaning cannot be pursued in relation to narrowly linguistic criteria, but must be assessed in relation to the practical, theological and social issues raised by Paul's concept of calling.[13] There is needed a range of more detailed questions with which to analyse the evidence, questions which will enable the building-up of conclusions regarding the broader concerns outlined above. I propose to employ the following seven questions:[14]

(i) What is revealed about God by the understanding that He is the one who calls?

(ii) If God calls, is there an expected and matching human response?

(iii) If through calling people God changes who they are, how is this change expressed? Does everyone who is called receive a role/task and, if so, what is it?

(iv) Is this change limited to a task, or does it also confer a new identity in terms of the relationship between the person called and God, or between the person called and other human beings?

(v) Is God's calling given primarily to individuals or to groups?

(vi) How does being called affect ethnic status?

(vii) How does being called affect social status?

These questions are aimed at providing a rounded picture of the way in which Paul uses the concept of calling in relation to conversion. They include questions

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[13]Martin (1990), p.xvii. "If one wishes to talk about the meaning of early Christian language, one must talk about that language in the context of the Graeco-Roman city. Regardless of the origin of the language, one must explain how it worked among and for Greek-speaking Gentiles."

[14]The questions loosely reflect the classification of Paul's use of καλέω κτλ. provided in **Appendix 1**.

which focus primarily on the new relationship with God established by conversion, but also ones which explore the social implications of that new relationship. New human relationships are also created by conversion, entailing both the disruption of existing social and communal patterns and the creation of new ones. In their turn, these bring with them new dilemmas and new answers as individuals and communities construct new rules and resources for living. With these concerns in mind I now preface a detailed examination of Paul's use of καλέω κτλ. with an exploration of comparable previous and contemporary usage. This comparative material is approached using the same seven questions as will be applied to Paul, and the intention is to provide a backdrop against which to situate Paul's own use of καλέω κτλ. This will enable an assessment to be made as to what is distinctive in Paul's use of the language of calling (**3.4.1**).

3.2 Calling in Paul's World

There can be no doubt that the principal background to Paul's use of the concept of calling is to be found in the Hebrew scriptures and, in terms of Jewish sources, it is natural that our emphasis should fall on the Septuagint. In terms of other surviving ancient Jewish texts Paul is unusual precisely in that he takes up and develops the language of calling. There is one other first century Jewish text, 4 Maccabees, which does use this vocabulary. However, this is a matter of only two occurrences and, rather than devote space to it here, we shall return to it later as a counterpoint to Paul's own usage (**3.4.1**). In terms of parallels in surviving Graeco-Roman texts, there are also very few authors who use the language of calling. Apart from isolated miscellaneous uses of καλέω, and despite some interesting other similarities between the Septuagint and Diogenes Laertius, the only significant parallel is provided by Epictetus the Stoic (c.50CE - 120CE), upon whom attention is therefore concentrated.[15]

[15]I am not aware of any others, having made a search which primarily examined the works of other Stoics. The fact that καλέω is an extremely common verb capable of conveying a wide range of meanings precludes an exhaustive search of Greek literature.

3.2.1 Calling in the Septuagint

Examining the occurrences of καλέω in the Septuagint is not easy, since it is an extremely common verb and is employed in a wide variety of ways.[16] There are numerous occasions where καλέω simply means a summons,[17] and others when it refers to the naming of an object or person.[18] In terms of God having been said to call, here too there are a variety of uses. God can speak audibly (call out) to his servants, such as to Moses[19] or to Samuel.[20] He can also be said to call events in the sense of summon them, for at 2 Kings 8:1 God calls a famine upon the land. At Wisdom 11:25 creation is spoken of as having been called into being by God,[21] and this sense of the summoning of creation into existence is matched by the way that God is sometimes said to have called the stars by name, so displaying an intimate knowledge of what he has made.[22] Yet none of these occurrences appear to be genuine forerunners of the way in which Paul uses καλέω.[23] If we are searching for cases which we might examine using the questions outlined above, then we are left with a comparatively small group of 19 Septuagintal uses, heavily concentrated in second/third Isaiah, from where 17 of them come.[24]

In terms of their characterisation of God, these texts employ various themes. Mention is made that God is everlasting,[25] and there are reminders of his past

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[16]καλέω appears 481 times in the Septuagint. There are no relevant uses of κλῆσις, and all bar one of the relevant uses of κλητός occur in the formula κλητὴ ἁγία - see **3.3.4**. The possible exception is at Zeph. 1:7, ὅτι ἡτοίμακε κύριος τὴν θυσίαν αὐτοῦ, καὶ ἡγίακε τοὺς κλητοὺς αὐτοῦ, although this may bear the restricted sense of an invitation to a single sacrificial meal.

[17]E.g. 2 Sam. 1:15 where David summons a servant.

[18]E.g. Lev. 13:45, which instructs that a leper shall be called unclean.

[19]Exodus 3:4, 19:3,20.

[20]In 1 Sam. 3 καλέω is used eleven times to describe God speaking to Samuel.

[21]God is told that Creation was κληθὲν ὑπὸ σου.

[22]E.g. Psalm 147:4

[23]However, they are not entirely irrelevant. A passage like Wisdom 11:25 is very different from Paul in the sense that he always speaks of God calling people. However, it remains relevant in that Paul can sometimes discuss God's call to human beings in ways that conceive of it as an act of creation. See Rom. 4:17 and **3.3.1**.

[24]Is. 41:2, 41:4, 41:9, 41:25, 42:6, 43:1, 45:3, 46:11, 48:12, 48:15, 49:1, 49:6, 50:2, 51:2, 61:6, 65:12, 66:4. The other two passages are Jer. 7:13 and Hos. 1:10.

[25]Is. 41:4, 48:12.

faithfulness to his people.[26] However, one theme emerges more consistently than any other, namely that the God who calls is the creator God. Sometimes he is said to have created those whom he calls. At Is.46:11 Cyrus is portrayed as the object of God's calling (καλῶν), who says of the Persian king, ἐλάλησα, καὶ ἤγαγον, ἔκτισα καὶ ἐποίησα, ἤγαγον αὐτὸν, καὶ εὐώδωσα τὴν ὁδὸν αὐτοῦ.[27] At Is. 43:1, where God encourages his people with the assurance that he has called Israel by name, the Lord is described as ὁ ποιήσας σε Ἰακὼβ, καὶ ὁ πλάσας σε Ἰσραὴλ. At other times it is his creation of the world which is in view and, although it is not explicitly stated, the function of such references to God's creative power seems to be to provide a basis for trust in the promises now being made through the prophet. An assurance at Is. 48:15 that the purpose of the calling of Cyrus is to benefit Israel is prefaced by a declaration from the Lord that ἡ χείρ μου ἐθεμελίωσε τὴν γῆν, καὶ ἡ δεξιά μου ἐστερέωσε τὸν οὐρανόν (Is. 48:13).[28] There is also some evidence that the act of calling itself could be thought of in terms of creation. Is. 51:1-3 refers to the calling of Abraham, and God's honouring of his promise to multiply the patriarch, in order to assure readers that he will now honour his promises to restore Zion. Abraham is described as the rock which those who seek the Lord have hewn and Sarah as the quarry which they have dug. For Westermann, this mention of rock and quarry is an allusion to ancient myths concerning the birth of men and women from such materials. The point of such an allusion here is "to give Israel's descent from Abraham and Sarah the status of an act of creation."[29]

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[26]Is. 46:8-10.

[27]Cyrus is not named, but instead referred to as a bird from the east. There is general agreement amongst commentators as to the identification. See Knight (1984), p.104; McKenzie (1968), p.87; Motyer (1993), p.370; North (1964), p.166; Westermann (ET 1969), p.185; Whybray (1975), p.117.

[28]See also Is. 42:5-9 and Is. 45:7, where the identity of the creator and the God who calls Cyrus (45:4) is once again asserted.

[29]Westermann (ET 1969), p.236. Knight (1984), p.149 disagrees, arguing that the rock is God, but allowing that when Abraham stood upon this rock, the power to become a rock for others was imputed to him. Knight's position is somewhat undermined by his acceptance that the quarry is a reference to Sarah and her barren womb, something which demands that the rock be identified with Abraham. Indeed, his position seems to have more to do with the exegesis of Mt. 16:18 than that of Is. 51:1-3.

Yet creation is by no means the only context in which the concept of calling appears. As implied above with reference to Is. 42:8-9 and Is. 51:1-3, there is also much said of God's dealing with Israel within history. A prominent theme here is that God called, but his people did not respond. Is. 66:4 provides a typical example, with God rejecting his people ὅτι ἐκάλεσα αὐτοὺς, καὶ οὐχ ὑπήκουσάν μου, ἐλάλησα καὶ οὐκ ἤκουσαν.[30] In every instance of Israel failing to respond similar vocabulary is used. God's people are said simply not to have obeyed (ὑπακούω),[31] or also not to have heard (ἀκούω, παρακούω).[32] Yet there are hints that these breaches in the relationship between God and his people may not be permanent, and that Israel will not always be unresponsive. The mention of divorce between God and Israel in Is. 50:1 is understood by commentators to refer not to a final split, but to a breach in relationship which left open the possibility of reconciliation.[33] Further, Hosea 1:10 states that those who had been told that they were not God's people shall be called his sons, a promise which in its own context refers to a restoration of those lost to the people of God through the destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel.[34] It seems that God's people can refuse to respond to his call, but not forever.

Such a conclusion is perhaps not all that surprising given the covenantal framework of thought within which these texts were formed. Yet that framework itself renders all the more striking what is said about whom God has called and the impact that calling has on their identity, and/or the role/task it grants them. As

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[30]See also Is. 50:2, Is. 65:12, Jer. 7:13.

[31]Is. 50:2, Jer. 7:13.

[32]Is. 65:12, Is. 66:4. In fact the two concepts are quite closely related in the Septuagint. Kittel (1964), p.224: "The frequent use of ὑπακούειν for שמע in the LXX shows how strongly the idea of hearing is still present for the translator in the Gk."

[33]Whybray (1975), p.149: "There is no divorce but only an informal separation or 'sending away', and consequently no hindrance to subsequent resumption of the marriage." See also Knight (1984), p.143; McKenzie (1968), p.112; Motyer (1993), p.397; North (1964), pp.98-99. Only Westermann (ET 1969), pp.223-24 seems to see the split as more final.

[34]Paul puts this verse to rather different use in Rom. 9:25-26. Ziesler (1989), p.248: "In Hosea the words have to do with the lapse and return of the northern kingdom of Israel, but as Paul uses them they concern the incoming of Gentiles; unlike the Israelite northerners, they have never previously been God's people."

referred to several times previously, one of those said to have been called is Cyrus of Persia.[35] In addition to being described as called, he is spoken of as ἀπὸ ἀνατολῶν δικαιοσύνη (Is 41:2), and as ὁ χριστός μου (Is. 45:1), a title previously used for pre-exilic Jerusalem rulers.[36] At Is. 45:4 the Lord says to Cyrus, Ἕνεκεν τοῦ παιδός μου Ἰακὼβ, καὶ Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ ἐκλεκτοῦ μου, ἐγὼ καλέσω σε τῷ ὀνόματί σου, καὶ προσδέξομαί σε. God has granted Cyrus prodigious power in order to benefit his servant Israel,[37] and, interestingly, servant (παῖς, δοῦλός) is a title never given to Cyrus, whose relationship with the Lord is less intimate.[38] It is said quite plainly to Cyrus σὺ δὲ οὐκ ἔγνως με (Is. 45:4b). God's calling gives Cyrus a new role, but it is one simply as an inadvertent agent of divine providence and of divine concern for Israel.[39] Cyrus is not aware that he has been called by Yahweh, his calling does not change his self-identity, he is not a convert. Although the terms applied to Cyrus are fulsome, perhaps even shockingly so,[40] his calling is to perform "a non-recurrent task in one particular set of circumstances. That is all he is anointed to do."[41]

If Cyrus' calling relates only to a task, the same cannot be said of that given to Israel.[42] Here the relationship with God is characterised in general terms, with

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[35]Is. 41:2, Is. 45:3-4, Is. 46:11, Is. 48:15. There is general agreement amongst commentators that in the MT there is also a reference to Cyrus and calling at Is. 41:25. A literal rendering of the Hebrew would give the meaning 'he shall call on my name.' Westermann (ET 1969), p.87 points out that this is problematic, since Cyrus never was a worshipper of Yahweh. Perhaps for this reason the LXX opts to employ the third person plural future passive form of the verb - κληθήσονται τῷ ὀνόματι μου, thus shifting the reference from Cyrus to the inhabitants of the north and the east, and from calling upon God to being called by him. See also Knight (1984), p.41.

[36]E.g. Ps. 2:2, Ps. 17(18):50, 1 Kings 16:6.

[37]The Septuagintal translators also introduce this idea at Is. 48:14 where Cyrus becomes the instrument of God's love for Israel. The MT says unambiguously that God has loved Cyrus. See Knight (1984), pp.119-20; McKenzie (1968), p.96; Motyer (1993), p.380; Westermann (ET 1969), p.201.

[38]Westermann (ET 1969), p.160: "While Deutero-Isaiah calls Cyrus Yahweh's anointed, he never calls him his servant, and this is simply because 'servant' implies a mutual relationship in which there is permanence."

[39]McKenzie (1968), p.28: "Cyrus will achieve something for which neither his own plans nor his resources are responsible. He will conquer as none of his predecessors have done, because it is necessary that he conquer the entire world known to the Israelites before Israel can be restored to its own land."

[40]See Westermann (ET 1969), p.159.

[41]Westermann (ET 1969), p.160.

[42]Is. 41:9, 42:6, 43:1, 48:12, 49:1, 49:6, 50:2, 65:12, 66:4, Jer. 7:13, Hos. 1:10.

Israel referred to as God's people (λαός)[43] or, in many of the texts from second Isaiah, as God's servant.[44] Here one of the most long-standing questions in the study of Isaiah becomes relevant, namely that of the identity of the servant in those passages known as the servant songs.[45] The traditional alternatives were that the servant is either a messianic figure, or simply a personification of the nation.[46] However, only those references to the servant's calling in Is. 49:1 and 49:6 fall within the servant songs proper so, on either of these views, all of the other relevant cases would refer to Israel as a nation.[47] Yet a more recent approach rejects the effective separation out of the servant songs and, considering second Isaiah as a whole, argues that it contains two Israels, one of which is positive and the other negative. In this case what we have is the "servant-group Israel seeking to re-establish and restore the whole servant-people Israel to their rightful place in the plan and purpose of God."[48] If this position is adopted then some of second Isaiah's references to the calling of Israel refer to the positive strand in the life of the nation,[49] and some to the negative.[50] None of the references to Israel's calling concern the entire nation, but all of them are to a group rather than to an individual and, in the case of the positive Israel, to a group called to the task of restoring the entire nation to a right relationship with God.

In two places this task is said to extend beyond the boundaries of Israel. Those called are εἰς διαθήκην γένους, εἰς φῶς ἐθνῶν (Is. 42:6, Is. 49:6),

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[43]Jer. 7:12, Hos:1:10.

[44]This is expressed using παῖς at Is. 41:8, Is. 42:1, Is. 49:6, but using δοῦλός at Is. 49:3, 49:5. These instances are all adjacent to references to Israel's calling, but in general second Isaiah prefers παῖς, Is. 48:20 being the only other instance of δοῦλός.

[45]Is. 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9, 52:13-53:12.

[46]Westermann (ET 1969), p.209 notes that "apart from 49:3, Deutero-Isaiah never uses Israel except in parallelism to Jacob." The servant is thus nearly always described using both an individual and a collective name.

[47]The reference to Israel's calling in Is. 42:6 is so close to one of these songs that if the messianic interpretation of the songs is adopted then its meaning might be held to be affected by its final context within Isaiah, even if it had originally been intended otherwise.

[48]Knight (1984), pp.130-31. Laato (1992) develops this idea at some length, arguing that the positive Israel is a circle of prophets.

[49]Is. 42:6, Is. 49:1, Is. 49:6.

[50]Is. 43:1, Is. 48:12.

and, implicitly at 42:6, and explicitly at 49:6, this task involves the extension of salvation (σωτηρία) to the Gentiles. At 49:6 this task is placed by the MT in contrast to that of restoring Israel, the latter being regarded as too small a thing for the servant.[51] Once again, the Septuagintal translators may have found the prophet uncomfortably radical here for they bind the two tasks together, with that of restoring Israel said to be a great (μέγα) task for the servant to be given. It is in this passage also that the idea of a pre-natal call appears, it being said of the servant's relationship with God that ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου ἐκάλεσε τὸ ὄνομά μου (Is. 49:1). There is thus a movement from the exclusive intimacy of the womb to σωτηρίαν ἕως ἐσχάτου τῆς γῆς (Is. 49:6). God's calling has expanded decisively.[52]

A similar expansion can be seen in the case of the only individual to be called apart from Cyrus. It is said at Is. 51:2 that Abraham was called when εἷς ἦν ...καὶ ἐπλήθυνα αὐτόν. This is the one instance in the Septuagint where calling might be termed conversion. As we have seen, Cyrus was no convert and, however the servant's identity is understood, the calling of Israel the servant takes place within a pre-existing relationship between God and His people. There are no obvious conversion motifs at Is. 51:2,[53] but the allusion to the act of creation in 51:1 does make it clear that the episode was one which established a new relationship between God and the patriarch.[54] This is significant because although our survey of calling in the Septuagint may prove to provide parallels to various aspects of Paul's use of καλέω κτλ., Paul's central equation of calling and conversion is not one of them. Abraham provides the only precedent, and at that a partial one, for this feature of Paul's usage. In the Septuagint, the God who calls is the creator who keeps his promises to his people despite their

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[51]McKenzie (1968), p.105; Motyer (1993), p.388; North (1964), p.190; Westermann (ET 1969), p.212; Whybray (1975), p.139.

[52]But perhaps it is more accurate to speak here of the extension of the *impact* of God's calling. The effects of the servant's calling extend to the ends of the earth, but it is not said that the Gentiles will be called. In both Is. 42:6 and Is. 49:1-6 their inclusion is described in other terms.

[53]Although Abraham did become the archetypal convert in Jewish tradition. See Adams (1997).

[54]See above, p.60.

unresponsive nature, and who calls individuals (Cyrus) and groups (positive Israel) to perform tasks which benefit that people. Although his calling sometimes looks beyond the boundaries of Israel to the salvation of the Gentiles, God does not call in the sense of convert.

3.2.2 Calling and Graeco-Roman Philosophy

3.2.2.1 Calling and Conversion to Philosophy

When one examines the use of καλέω κτλ. in Graeco-Roman literature, it is philosophy which provides nearly all the relevant examples.[55] Philosophy stands out because, although not dogmatic or exclusive, it did demand a certain lifestyle, and it did have a sense of mission in the quest for truth.[56] Individuals who were previously quite definitely not philosophers might become so, and we have a number of stories which relate such a change in a way that might lead us appropriately to label them as conversion or call narratives.[57] This is an etic description, since none of these narratives employ καλέω κτλ., or any other terms which might be considered technical equivalents for conversion. However, three stories related by Diogenes Laertius do display a certain consistency in the way they characterise the response of those converted to philosophy.[58] Having been confronted by him in an Athenian alley, Xenophon is said to have become a hearer (ἀκροατής) of Socrates.[59] Here the noun functions as an equivalent to 'pupil' or 'follower', and the same can be true of the verb. On having the

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[55]The exceptions are Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece*, 10.32.13 and Aelius Aristides, *Orations*, 30.9. The former tells of a shrine of Isis near Tithorea in Phocis, which none may enter unless called to do so by the goddess herself through the means of a dream. The latter tells of a call given by Asclepius to one Quadratus, upon whom is conferred the task of restoring the city of Pergamum.

[56]Nock (1933), pp.164-86 draws attention to these features in order to argue that conversion to philosophy was the only genuine parallel within Graeco-Roman society to conversion to Christianity. Nock's definition of conversion may be vulnerable to criticism (see **1.1**), but he is certainly correct to draw attention to the parallel.

[57]Hengel (ET 1981), p.28: "The motif of a 'conversion to philosophy' comparable to a 'call' is to be found in particular in the early Academy and among the Cynics." The texts Hengel, pp.27-33, regards as relevant are Aristotle, *Fragments*, 'Nerinthos' 74; Diogenes Laertius, *Lives*, 2.48, 4.16f., 6.13f., 6.22, 6.87f.,7.3; Philostratus, *Vita Apoll.* 1.13, 1.33, 1.34.

[58]Diogenes Laertius is unknown except from his *Lives of the Philosophers*, which he is believed to have compiled in the third century CE.

[59]Diogenes Laertius 2.48. Hicks (1925), p.179, gives the translation 'from that time onward he was a *pupil* of Socrates.'

passing Crates pointed out to him by the owner of an Athenian book shop, Zeno followed the philosopher and ἐντεῦθεν ἤκουσε τοῦ Κράτητος.[60] The intoxicated Polemo disrupted a lecture by Xenophon only to be converted to philosophy by hearing (ἀκοῦον) the discourse.[61] As Polemo was a resident of Athens, and as the disruption was deliberately planned, he is presumably not being said to have heard the contents of Xenophon's philosophy for the first time, since he knew enough of it to wish to express his contempt. On this occasion Polemo hears in a way that he has not heard before, one which produces a positive response, receiving what is heard rather than rejecting it. Although it is not explicitly as a response to being *called*, Diogenes Laertius regards hearing as an appropriate response to the claim of philosophy upon one's life, just as the Septuagint regards hearing as an appropriate response to the call of the Lord.[62]

3.2.2.2 Calling in Epictetus

Epictetus the Stoic (c.50CE - 120CE) is one philosopher who explicitly describes philosophy as a calling.[63] Epictetus teaches that the philosopher is called to bear witness to the true nature of life, whereby all that is morally good is within the grasp of each individual, i.e., it is 'internal' in the sense that it is not determined by any of the material circumstances of our lives. These are beyond our control, but the good consists of what is ours to control, namely conception, choice, desire, aversion etc.[64] If the individual maintains a proper division between these two classes of things then it is possible to live in freedom, and no material circumstance, however grim, can touch the self. It is an approach perhaps most memorably summed up by Epictetus'

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[60]Diogenes Laertius 7.3. Hicks (1925), p.113 has 'from that day he became Crates's *pupil*.' Note that Aristotle, *Fragments*, 'Nerinthos' 74, provides an entirely different account of how Zeno became a philosopher.

[61]Diogenes Laertius 4.16f.

[62]See above, p.61.

[63]Epictetus refers to philosophy as a calling 5 times in his *Discourses* - 1.29.33, 1.29.46, 1.29.49, 2.1.34, 2.1.39. At *Encheiridion* 7 he compares life to a shore visit during a sea voyage. When the captain calls one must be prepared to respond immediately, leaving behind whatever one has collected. Within this imagery the call given by the captain is clearly an audible one, but equally clearly the figure of the captain stands for God.

[64]See *Diss.* 1.1 and *Ench.* 1.1.

quotation from Plato's *Apology* of the words of his hero Socrates, Ἄνυτος καὶ Μέλητος ἀποκτεῖναι μὲν δύνανται, βλάψαι δ' οὔ.[65]

Further, this calling is given by God. The philosopher mounts the stage of life ὡς μάρτυς ὑπὸ τοῦ θεοῦ κεκλημένος,[66] and is told by God that he has been considered worthy to be produced as a witness. This role may involve considerable hardships in relation to those things which do not belong to the moral world and so are beyond the control of the philosopher. He must be a witness whether he finds himself enjoying the privileges of senatorial rank, or whether he finds himself in rags. To those who complain against God in such circumstances Epictetus poses the rhetorical question, ταῦτα μέλλεις μαρτυρεῖν καὶ καταισχύνειν τὴν κλῆσιν ἣν κέκληκεν;[67] To complain about material circumstances is to make a fundamental mistake and, instead, the philosopher should concentrate his attention on those things within the moral purpose, for it is only they which have the power to make one lead a life of error. Those things outside the moral purpose, such as material circumstances, can be approached with cheerful confidence. In fact, the philosopher should welcome hardship, for being called (κληθέντα) to face a difficulty means that ἐλήλυθεν ὁ καιρὸς τοῦ ἀποδεῖξαι, εἰ πεπαιδεύμεθα.[68] Hardship is a καιροῦ καλοῦντος,[69] and in response the philosopher should leave lawsuits and intellectual problems to others, instead practising how to die, or to be in chains, or tortured, or exiled. Epictetus instructs his hearers, πάντα ταῦτα θαρρούντως, πεποιθότως τῷ κεκληκότι σε ἐπ' αὐτά, τῷ ἄξιον τῆς χώρας ταύτης κεκρικότι.[70] Once again, the philosopher has been called by God and deemed worthy to fill such a role.

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[65]*Diss.* 1.29.18; Plato, *Apology*, 30c. For a fuller account of Epictetus' moral teaching see Vorster (1990), pp.39-44.
[66]*Diss.* 1.29.46
[67]*Diss.* 1.29.49
[68]*Diss.* 1.29.33
[69]*Diss.* 2.1.34
[70]*Diss.* 2.1.39

All of this makes very clear what Epictetus regards as an appropriate response to the call to be a philosopher, namely to live the morally good life in whatever circumstances one finds oneself. Yet it is far less clear what Epictetus thought about the God who gives such callings. At one point Epictetus approvingly quotes Euphrates as saying that his being a philosopher was πάντα ἐμαυτῷ καὶ θεῷ.[71] The centrality of this desire to please God distinguishes Epictetus from other Stoics. Like them his concept of God was formally a monistic one, but it has often been noted that the way in which he actually speaks about God seems to imply a much more personal deity. Epictetus does indeed think that it is "the obligation of human beings to live in conformity with immanent reason,"[72] but he conceives that immanent reason in a strikingly concrete manner. Oldfather speaks of Epictetus as having "conceived of his God in as vivid a fashion as the writers of the New Testament, and almost as intimately as the founder of Christianity himself."[73] Stadter says that "for Epictetus, his teaching was his service to God, and he followed this profession as a divine calling,"[74] while Long notes that "Epictetus calls God the father of mankind."[75] There is thus no doubt that, for Epictetus, calling is a divine act.

However, this act is always viewed from the perspective of present moral responsibility. Neither God's role as creator, nor his concern for the salvation of his creatures, are emphasised in relation to calling. Instead, the focus is relentlessly on the task to which the philosopher has been called, the witness which must be borne even in the midst of hardship. At *Discourses* 1.29.44-49, the concept of bearing witness (μαρτυρέω, μάρτυς) appears repeatedly, and Oldfather is undoubtedly right here to translate all the occurrences of καλέω κτλ. in terms of a summons. If this legal

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[71]*Diss.* 4.8.18
[72]Kee (1985), p.144. Kee, pp.135-44, provides a useful survey of Stoic thought in relation to 'eschatology.'
[73]Oldfather (1926), p.viii. The tone is admittedly old-fashioned, but the point is clear.
[74]Stadter (1980), p.24.
[75]Long (1984), p.235.

metaphor does speak of a new relationship with God, then it is a relationship concentrated on a particular task. Although this task is open-ended and relevant to every situation in life, Epictetus does not use καλέω κτλ. to refer back to the start of a person's life as a philosopher. This vocabulary expresses what it is to be a philosopher, but it does not specifically refer to the conversion to philosophy. The philosopher's task may grant a relationship with God, but there is little sense of calling as the decisive event which initiated this relationship, and there is little hint that calling creates new relationships with other people. To be called does not result in becoming part of a community.[76] Instead, the philosopher should show πῶς ἄνθρωπος ἀναστρέφεται πεπαιδευμένος,[77] and demonstrate τίνα δύναται λογικὸν ἡγεμονικὸν πρὸς τὰς ἀπροαιρέτους δυνάμεις ἀντιταξάμενον.[78] These are the virtues of detachment. Epictetus conceives God's calling as directed towards the individual; God has no people.

Not surprisingly, this means that ethnic status is simply an absent issue in Epictetus' references to calling. Yet through his insistence on the indifference of the philosopher to material circumstances, social status looms large. Epictetus, himself a former slave, asserts that when a slave is manumitted very little has happened at all, since manumission cannot make anyone truly free.[79] If freedom is not a benefit, then neither is enslavement a disadvantage, for Epictetus insists that even if circumstances should take away the time needed to read and think, philosophers can still fulfil their calling. Even

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[76]The philosophical schools are sometimes held to resemble the Pauline churches, but even Alexander (1994), p.62, one of the advocates of this thesis, admits that, "The prevailing picture of 'a closed organisation of initiated disciples' which scholars have gleaned from these groups (Pythagoreans and Epicureans) is not obviously reflected, for example, among the Stoics." See also Meeks (1983), p.83. A recent article uses network analysis to explore the reasons for Epictetus' failure to persuade members of his network to adopt his ethical Stoicism as a way of life. Hock (1992), p.140: "Epictetus' students and visitors were themselves part of social networks which transmitted and reinforced a merely academic norm for those who wanted to call themselves Stoics." See *Diss.* 2.19 for a tirade against this academic norm.

[77]*Diss.* 1.29.44

[78]*Diss.* 2.1.39

[79]*Diss.* 2.1.25-28

leisure to read and think is something outside the moral world.[80] This counsel of indifference makes Epictetus' attitude towards society difficult to categorise. On the one hand his views implicitly question dominant values and practices such as honour and patronage, on the other he would not regard any attempt to change these things as capable of setting people genuinely free. He asks rhetorically, Ὑμεῖς οὖν οἱ φιλόσοφοι διδάσκετε καταφρονεῖν τῶν βασιλέων; - Μὴ γένοιτο. τίς ἡμῶν διδάσκει ἀντιποιεῖσθαι πρὸς αὐτούς, ὧν ἐκεῖνοι ἔχουσιν ἐξουσίαν;[81] He does not regard it as any part of the business of philosophers to attempt to change the ways of kings, but neither would he allow that the things over which kings have authority include the judgements of philosophers. Epictetus is no social revolutionary, but neither does he reify the status quo.

3.2.3 Summary

Assessed in relation to the seven questions with which we approached their use of the concept of calling, the Septuagint and Graeco-Roman philosophy present both interesting similarities and striking divergences:

(i) Both the biblical writers and Epictetus present calling as an act of God but, hardly surprisingly, the way in which they conceive of God is different. Epictetus discusses God's calling solely in relation to present moral responsibility, but in second Isaiah stress is also placed upon God's role as creator, God's everlasting nature, and God's faithfulness to His promises.

(ii) The same vocabulary can be used to describe an appropriate response to a calling. Diogenes Laertius uses the concept of hearing to denote entry into the philosophical life, and the Septuagint understands hearing and obeying as the right response to God's call. However, it must be remembered that Diogenes Laertius does not

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[80] *Diss.* 4.4.6-13
[81] *Diss.* 1.29.9

himself discuss philosophy as a calling, and the person whom one hears is another human being, not God. For Epictetus, it is God who calls, and the appropriate human response is patient endurance of suffering in witness to the truth.

(iii) The roles and tasks granted by calling are rather different. Here the Septuagint is marked by diversity. Cyrus of Persia is an inadvertent agent of divine providence, if a much blessed one; Abraham is knowingly the father of a nation; Israel is to be a light to the Gentiles. In contrast, Epictetus is relentlessly singular. The philosopher is to be a witness to the truth about the moral good.

(iv) In terms of a change in identity through relationships, the emphasis of the Septuagint is on the restoration of God's people. God's servant nation is called to once again be true to their God, to be who they are. For Epictetus, one who is called to philosophy has a changed relationship with God and other people only in the sense of having been deemed worthy to be a witness. It is this role which is primary.

(v) The preponderance of references to the calling of Israel suggests that the Septuagint understands God's calling to operate primarily in relation to a group, namely God's people. For Epictetus, it operates primarily in relation to individuals. There is little sense that by becoming a philosopher one joins a community.

(vi) In the Septuagint ethnic status looms large in relation to calling. On the one hand, the calling of both Abraham and Cyrus operate in relation to that of Israel. On the other, God's concern is said to extend beyond Israel, and part of the purpose of Israel's calling is to be a light to the nations. For Epictetus, ethnicity is simply not an issue.

(vii) The same is true of the Septuagint in relation to social status. It simply does not appear as an issue. Yet here, his emphasis on indifference to material

circumstances means that Epictetus has much to say. The philosopher must be prepared to accept either the most exalted or the most lowly position in society as the context in which to fulfil his calling.

These conclusions provide a backdrop against which to situate Paul's concept of calling, and they will be compared to those reached through putting the same questions to Paul's own use of καλέω κτλ. (**3.4.1**). The Septuagint is clearly a source for Paul's use of this vocabulary in the sense that, had it not appeared in the scriptures, it seems unlikely that Paul would have employed the concept of calling. Yet as we shall see, despite important similarities, this does not mean that Paul uses the concept in an identical way, and the material drawn from Graeco-Roman philosophy will help us to situate the differences. On the one hand we shall see that Paul shares some concerns present in Epictetus but absent from the Septuagint, most notably that of the relationship between calling and social status. On the other, Paul does not necessarily have identical things to say in relation to these common concerns, and there are areas where, even as he diverges from the Septuagint, Paul appears much closer to it than to Epictetus. For example, that God has a people is not an idea which Epictetus contemplates. Since Paul's letters were written during years which were probably those of Epictetus' childhood, the latter is clearly not a source for Paul's use of the concept of calling. Yet the marked differences between the two also make it obvious that Paul's and Epictetus' concepts of calling do not share a common source. The philosophical material therefore provides useful analogies to Paul's use of καλέω κτλ., but nothing which is more directly related. Indeed, in both it and the Septuagint perhaps the most striking feature is the one which is missing. Calling is not used to denote conversion.[82]

[82]As implied above, pp.64-65, the concept of conversion may have been available or relevant to the authors of the Septuagint to only a limited degree. However, this fact only serves to highlight the new focus of Paul's usage.

3.3 Calling in Paul

3.3.1 The God Who Calls

At Rom. 4:17 Paul speaks of the God in whom Abraham believed as τοῦ ζῳοποιοῦντος τοὺς νεκροὺς καὶ καλοῦντος τὰ μὴ ὄντα ὡς ὄντα. Although it has been disputed, there is little doubt that the calling referred to here is God's act of creation, calling into existence the things that do not exist.[83] Yet it is not clear what metaphorical function this reference to creation performs in Paul's argument. Certainly creation is being evoked in relation to the promise of faith (4:16), but which aspect of the fulfilment of that promise is here compared to creation? There are several opinions to choose from. Does 4:17-18 refer to the giving of life to the dead womb of the barren Sarah?[84] Or is there here a reference to the faith which Abraham demonstrated in his abortive sacrifice of Isaac?[85] Or rather than looking back to Abraham, have these verses moved on to anticipate the resurrection of the dead?[86] Exercising caution, Ziesler sees in 4:17 a range of possible metaphorical references. "The point is that God has created life where there was no life, in giving a son to Abraham and Sarah, in calling the Gentiles into his people, and we look forward to v.25 where he creates life in the resurrection of Jesus Christ."[87]

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[83]Wisdom 11:25 provides a clear precedent for describing creation in terms of calling - see above p.59 n.21. However, it was once widely held that to denote the objective fact of non-existence would require τὰ οὐκ ὄντα, whereas τά μή ὄντα implies a subjective impression, i.e. 'things reputed not to exist.' See, for example, Godet (ET 1886), pp.112-13. However, Lightfoot (1895), p.166 alleges that "In fact τὰ μὴ ὄντα is much more usual than τὰ οὐκ ὄντα in the sense of 'things not existing'." He seems to have won the argument since most recent commentaries do not even mention the other possibility. But see Cranfield (1975), p.244, and Zerwick and Grosvenor (1979), p.468: "not speaking of non-existent things as if they existed, but *calling* them *into existence*."

[84]Fitzmyer (1993), p.386.

[85]Barrett (1971a), pp.96-97.

[86]Käsemann (ET 1980), p.123: "It is an anticipation of the resurrection of the dead, which as no other event deserves to be called a creation out of nothing and presents the eschatological repetition of the first creation."

[87]Ziesler (1989), p.132.

Ziesler undoubtedly has a point. In 4:17 Paul is asserting who God is, and if he is the God who creates then it is not unreasonable to expect this aspect of his character to manifest itself in a variety of ways. Part of the beauty of the metaphor is its ability to evoke the whole sweep of salvation history. Yet if we pay attention to the context of the verse, there is one point in that history on which the focus principally falls, namely the calling of the Gentiles into God's people. Paul quotes the promise of Gen. 17:5, πατέρα πολλῶν ἐθνῶν τέθεικά σε, so depicting Abraham as the father of all who have faith in order to demonstrate the legitimacy of his law-free gospel for Gentiles. This is the purpose of his argument, and the connection between the detail of 4:17 and this wider purpose is best captured by Calvin:

> "He (Abraham) was, however, past procreation, and therefore it was necessary for him to raise his thoughts to the power of God who gives life to the dead. There is, therefore, no absurdity if the Gentiles, who are otherwise barren and dead, are brought into the fellowship ...We have here, moreover, the type and pattern of our general calling, by which our beginning is set before our eyes (not that which relates to our first birth, but which relates to the hope of the future life), namely, that when we are called of God we arise out of nothing."[88]

Here is both the correct breadth of reference (from Abraham's wish for an heir right through to the Christian hope for resurrection life), combined with the proper principal focus on the bringing of the Gentiles into God's people. Thus, the main point of using the metaphor of creation is to refer to conversion. Considerable support is offered to this interpretation by 1 Cor. 1:28. In a context which clearly refers to the conversion of Paul's readers (1:26), God is said to have chosen τὰ μὴ ὄντα, ἵνα τὰ ὄντα καταργήσῃ. Here those lacking existence suffer primarily the non-existence of social exclusion,[89] but it is conversion which demonstrates God's refusal to mirror that exclusion in his dealings with human beings. They are granted existence on his higher

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[88]Calvin (ET 1961), pp.95-96.

[89]Godet (ET 1886), p.113. They are denied "the recognition of any value whatever in public opinion."

authority. Again conversion involves God calling into existence the things that do not exist. For Paul, the God who calls is the creator, and the act of calling is an expression of this aspect of God's character.

3.3.2 The Human Response

Yet Rom. 4:17 and 1 Cor. 1:28 are the only texts which directly present calling in terms of creation. To draw from them alone the general conclusion that Paul understands calling to have the status of an act of creation might be overly hasty. Their meaning could prove to be atypical. Here the question of human response to divine calling is of assistance since things that do not exist are in no position to make a response, either positive or negative. Only once they have already been called into existence can they act for themselves. There can be no response from them which either makes it possible for their calling to take place, or which prevents it. If they subsequently react it will be as a consequence of their having been called, and not an integral part of the act of calling itself. Such is the logical outcome of conceiving calling as an act of creation. Whether or not we find this pattern will provide us with an indication as to whether Paul is consistent in the way he understands calling.

Certainly there is no term describing a human response which regularly appears in connection with καλέω κτλ. None of the other verbs used by Paul to refer to his readers having come to be in Christ do so, despite the fact that some appear well suited to the task of denoting a response. Πιστεύω never stands in relation to καλέω κτλ.,[90] neither does παραλανβάνω, and λαμβάνω does so only once. This is at Rom. 1:5 where Paul speaks of himself as among those who received χάριν καὶ ἀποστολὴν, having earlier referred to himself as κλητὸς ἀπόστολος (Rom. 1:1).[91]

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[90]πιστεύω appears in the aorist active form twelve times. Seven of these instances seem to refer either to the point at which Christians came to be in Christ, or to the point at which Abraham came to faith - Rom. 4:3, 10:14, 13:11, 1 Cor. 3:5, 15:2, 15:11, Gal. 3:6.

[91]There are twelve other occasions when the concept of receiving something could be said to apply to having come to be in Christ - the gospel/tradition about Christ/God's Word (Gal. 1:9, 1:12, 1 Cor. 11:23,

Such a connection is significant, for the purpose of the grace and apostleship which Paul has received is to bring about the obedience of faith (ὑπακοὴν πίστεως) among the nations, in which are included Paul's readers in Rome, who are κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:6).[92] Thus, those who are 'called of Jesus Christ' are implicitly expected to display the 'obedience of faith.'[93] Whether this phrase equates faith and obedience, or whether it speaks of obedience as the result of faith is much debated.[94] One doubts that an either/or choice is strictly necessary. Anxiety at any hint that salvation involves works has led some to strenuously insist that the obedience required is faith,[95] but if Paul had shared such anxiety, then surely he would not have combined the two in a single genitive phrase. More likely is a concern on Paul's part to demonstrate that far from being the opposite of obedience, faith implies it.[96] Yet however one understands the phrase 'obedience of faith', the fact that it results from apostolic ministry does make it appear a response. What is less clear is whether it is a response determined by the fact that the Romans have been called, or whether their calling to some degree depends upon their faith. Again, one doubts whether the context demands an absolute either/or choice, but it is the ministry of those called to be apostles which produces the obedience of faith. The faith of those who display this response depends upon God's effective calling of others, and so the primary emphasis is on divine initiative rather than human response.

15:1, 15:3, 1 Thess. 2:13), the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:25[2], 1 Cor. 2:12, 2 Cor. 11:4, Gal. 3:2), and grace (Rom. 5:17).

[92]This genitive phrase could mean 'called by Jesus Christ', or it could mean 'called to belong to Jesus Christ'. Most commentators prefer the latter since Paul nowhere else pictures Jesus rather than God as the one who calls and because, in the previous verse, the obedience of faith is ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ, thus suggesting that believers bear Christ's name. See Barrett (1971a), p.22; Dunn (1988), p.19; Sanday & Headlam (1896), p.12. For the opposite point of view, see Cranfield (1975), p.68.

[93]The same phrase also appears at Rom. 16:26. However, even among those who accept that chapter 16 as a whole formed part of Paul's original letter, some doubt that 16:25-27 did so. See Garlington (1991), p.1 n.1.

[94]Ziesler (1989), pp.63-64. "It could be the faith that consists in obedience, or indeed the obedience that consists in faith ...It could be the faith that leads to, or requires, obedience." Although he believes it to imply rather than exclude the latter, Ziesler decides that the primary focus is on the former because "the context is about becoming a Christian."

[95]E.g. Käsemann (ET 1980), p.15.

[96]See the comments of Barrett (1971a), p.21 and Garlington (1991), p.1 n.4. Certainly Rom. 6:1-2 suggests sensitivity on Paul's part to the charge that his theology legitimated disobedience.

Similar questions arise at 1 Cor. 1:1-3, a letter opening which contains many similar features to Rom. 1:1-6. Just as the obedience of faith is the mark of the wider church of which the Romans are a part, so here the Corinthians are part of a wider church whose members are τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου (1:2). Paul uses the verb ἐπικαλέω only five times,[97] and only here does it stand in relationship with καλέω so that those who are called are also those who call upon the name of the Lord. In the Septuagint, and especially in Genesis, it often denotes calling upon the name of the Lord in the context of an act of worship,[98] but it also developed a wider range of meaning, so that one might call upon the name of the Lord for deliverance, or for salvation.[99] In Rom. 10:13 this soteriological sense is to the fore when Paul quotes Joel 3:5, πᾶς γὰρ ὃς ἂν ἐπικαλέσηται τὸ ὄνομα κυρίου σωθήσεται. Doubtless to call upon the name of the Lord for salvation inevitably leads one to worship, but here that is not the primary meaning. If the soteriological sense is the main one at 1 Cor. 1:2 also, then we would have an instance of God's calling having a human response which enables and completes it. However, this seems not to be the case.[100] The phrase ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ can be rendered simply 'in every place', but is taken to imply 'in every meeting-place'.[101] The use of primarily 'cultic' terms such as the verb 'to sanctify' (ἁγιάζω) and its cognate noun 'the saints' (οἱ ἅγιοι) in the same verse is also strongly suggestive of worship.[102] Of course, calling upon the name of Christ in worship would make little sense were it not for his soteriological function. As in Rom. 10:13, the one sense does not exclude the other, but the primary emphasis is different in each case.

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[97]Rom. 10:12, 10:13, 10:14, 1 Cor. 1:2, 2 Cor. 1:23.
[98]E.g. Gen. 4:26, 13:4, 21:33, 26:25.
[99]E.g. Ps. 50:15. See Fee (1987), p.33 n.26.
[100]Weiss (1910), p.4: "Denn hier handelt es sich um das dauernde und wiederholte 'Anrufen' des Namens im Gebet, während Röm 10:12,13,14 (auch Apg. 2:21, 22:16) der entscheidende grundsätzliche Akt der Anrufung bei der Bekehrung gemeint ist, der die Rettung verbürgt."
[101]Barrett (1971b), pp.33-34 and Fee (1987), p.34 both accept this point, which was first made by Lietzmann (1969), p.5, based on Jewish synagogue inscriptions. It is disputed by Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.23 n.38.
[102]On the nature of these terms, see **3.3.4**.

At 1 Cor. 1:2 calling upon the name of the Lord is a response to God's calling, but one that is consequent upon it rather than constitutive of it.

Thus, in relation to calling, Paul provides nothing which might be construed as a constitutive response, and remarkably little which might be construed in terms of human response at all. Indeed, in the one case where there is clearly implied a negative human response to God's call, that response is portrayed as ultimately ineffective. Israel may have rejected the gospel but this is not final, ἀμεταμέλητα γὰρ τὰ χαρίσματα καὶ ἡ κλῆσις τοῦ θεοῦ (Rom. 11:28). Yet it is not as though Paul's letters lack responsive terms in general. The concept of obedience is frequently used in a way which suggests it to be a constitutive part of being a Christian.[103] Similarly, Paul speaks of hearing as a vital part of coming to be in Christ.[104] Indeed, these terms appear in close proximity in Rom. 10:14-18, and the phrase ἀκοῆς πίστεως (Gal. 3:2) is reminiscent of ὑπακοὴν πίστεως (Rom. 1:5). That faith is the common factor is significant, since faith also figures strongly in Rom. 10:14-18.[105] It seems almost as if we are dealing with alternative sets of vocabulary. When he wishes to discuss the human dimension of conversion Paul reaches for, among others, the concepts of faith, of hearing, and of obedience. When it is the divine dimension of conversion which he has in mind,[106] καλέω κτλ. is his favourite cluster of terms.[107] Rom. 1:1-6 and 1 Cor. 1:1-3

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[103]The verb ὑπακούω is used in this way at Rom. 6:16, 6:17, 10:16, Phil. 2:12. As well as at Rom. 1:5, the noun ὑπακοή is used in this way at Rom. 6:16[2], 15:18, 16:26.

[104]The verb ἀκούω is used in this way at Rom. 10:14[2], 10:18, 11:8, 15:21, Phil. 4:9. The noun ἀκοή is so used at Rom. 10:16, 10:17[2], Gal. 3:2, 3:5, 1 Thess. 2:13.

[105]The verb πιστεύω at Rom. 10:14[2], 10:16, and the noun πίστις at Rom. 10:17.

[106]If the lack of a matching vocabulary of human response provides negative proof that calling speaks of the divine dimension of conversion, then positive support is provided by Rom. 8:30, where calling is one item in a sequence of salvific divine actions running from foreknowledge to glorification. Dunn (1988), p.485 comments, "The thought is not of an invitation which might be rejected; God does not leave his purpose to chance, but puts it into effect himself ...ἐκάλεσεν denotes divinely accomplished conversion."

[107]Of the other terms expressing God's salvific initiative, the verb ἐκλέγομαι occurs only three times (1 Cor. 1:27[2], 1:28 - although the noun ἐκλογή appears at Rom. 9:11, 11:5, 11:7, 11:28), the verb ἐξαγοράζω only twice (Gal. 3:13, 4:5), the verb ἁγιάζω six times (Rom. 15:16, 1 Cor. 1:2, 6:11, 7:14[2], 1 Thess. 5:23), and the verb καταλαμβάνω only once (Phil. 3:12). This leaves the verb δικαιόω as the next most frequently used term to describe God's initiative. See above, p.54 n.2.

are rare instances of the two sets of vocabulary to some degree overlapping. Otherwise these two sets provide alternative perspectives from which to view conversion, perspectives which Paul utilises without formulating their implicit tension between divine providence and human freedom.[108] Whichever of these two perspectives better represents Paul's thought as a whole,[109] there can be no doubt that the concept of calling belongs to the divine dimension of conversion. Rom. 4:17 may be unusual in conceiving of calling as an act of creation, but it is certainly not anomalous in its depiction of calling as a divine act.

3.3.3 Calling to a Role/Task

Paul refers to his call to be an apostle three times.[110] If Rom. 1:1-6 did not make it clear enough, Gal 1:16 is explicit that this was ἵνα εὐαγγελίζωμαι αὐτὸν ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. Those whose faith has resulted from this commission are characterised in a different way. They are κλητοὶ ἅγιοι,[111] a phrase which seems to stand in direct relation to Paul's κλητὸς ἀπόστολος. That it does so raises some difficult questions, for they are clearly not precise equivalents. All of Paul's readers have been called to be saints, and this term is one that applies to every Christian, but the call to be an apostle is restricted to a few. Further, whereas Paul is explicit about what he is to do as an apostle, the saints do not have a specified task or role. Instead, οἱ ἅγιοι functions as a general term, which means 'the Christians', but does so from the particular aspect of their being a people set apart for God.[112] This is who they are, not what they are to do, however much the latter may quite properly follow from the former. This contrast between the role or task of the apostle and the identity of the saints is not an

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[108]Even in Romans 9-11 where Israel's resistance to the gospel provides what appears to be a classic instance of tension between divine providence and human freedom, Paul's focus remains firmly on Israel. The wider theoretical issue is discussed by implication only, with chapter 9 seeming to emphasise divine providence, and chapter 10 human freedom. It is noteworthy that the concept of calling features strongly in Rom. 9 (Rom. 9:7, 9:12, 9:24, 9:25, 9:26, 9:29), but not at all in Rom. 10.

[109]For a discussion see Westerholm (1997), pp.110-14.

[110]Rom. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:1, Gal. 1:15. For a full discussion of Gal. 1:11-17 see **5.2**.

[111]Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2. For a discussion of this phrase, see below pp.30-31.

[112]See Balz (ET 1990), pp.16-19. Paul uses the term twenty-five times without once giving any hint that to be a saint implies a particular task.

absolute one since anyone reading Paul can sense that his apostleship is not something that governs merely one aspect of his life, or which demands of him a task he might one day complete and lay down.[113] In an important sense the task of sharing the gospel defines who he is, yet it is an identity in large part based on a task whereas to be a saint is not.

This raises a dilemma. Should one emphasise this difference, or should one emphasise the fact that both Paul and his converts have been called by the same God? How one answers has the potential to make a significant difference to one's ecclesiology. On the side of difference lies the fact that apostleship is the only role to which Paul applies the vocabulary of calling. It does appear first in the list of such roles given at 1 Cor. 12:28-31, but they are there described as χαρίσματα. Yet despite the fact that he claims this leadership role for apostles, and hence for himself, Paul is quite clear that apostolic calling is for the sake of the community. As we have seen from Rom. 1:1-7, he is κλητὸς ἀπόστολος in order that they might be κλητοὶ ἅγιοι. Analysed in the abstract the tension between these two callings is obvious, but understood in this more dynamic way they enjoy a unity as part of the unfolding of God's purposes. Just as Paul can say that God set him apart ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου (Gal. 1:15), so he can say of God's relationship with all Christians that those οὓς προέγνω, καὶ προώρισεν (Rom. 8:29). Paul's attention is primarily focused on the God who calls, and on his saving purposes, rather than on the relative positions of the human beings who are called.[114] His position can be summarised thus: some who are called receive a specific task as an apostle, and in their case this is part of the way in which conversion changes their identity. Yet the purpose of this task is to play a role in securing the conversion of a much greater number of others for whom a change of identity is expressed in other ways.

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[113]See Rom. 15:18-24 for evidence of Paul's unlimited conception of his task.

[114]Lightfoot (1895), p.143. "His apostleship and their church membership were both alike to be traced to the same source, to the merciful call of God, and not to their own merits."

3.3.4 Calling and Identity

What does it mean to be κλητοὶ ἅγιοι? Particularly in relation to 1 Cor. 1:2, where Paul addresses his letter ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, this is part of the wider question of the meaning of the group of cognate terms (ἁγιάζω, ἅγιος κτλ.) usually translated into English in terms of sanctification. Are these terms 'cultic,' or 'ethical,' or both?[115] In fact, critical opinion is largely united in understanding these to be primarily cultic terms, but ones which have strong ethical consequences.[116] This is based on the Septuagintal usage, where the primary meaning of these terms is clearly cultic, since the objects of the sentences in which they appear are priests, people, places and vessels, i.e., persons, things, or locations set apart in the context of worship.[117] However, this 'set apartness' had come to apply to Israel in the whole of its life as God's people.[118] They were to be a holy, separate nation and this wider horizon naturally granted the terms a strong moral component, since Israel's separateness was to be instantiated in behaviour. When Paul applies these terms to his converts, he is saying that they are a people set apart by God.[119] This implies nothing

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[115]Of course, in the conventional sense, the absence of sacrifices, priests etc. meant that early Christianity had no cult. What is intended when Paul is said to have used the concept of sanctity in a cultic sense is that it primarily expresses God's setting apart of persons as his people.

[116]On 1 Cor. 1:2 see Barrett (1971b), p.32; Fee (1987), pp.32-33; Godét (ET 1886), p.42; Héring (ET 1962), p.2; Lightfoot (1895), p.145. On Rom. 1:7 see Barrett (1971a), p.22; Cranfield (1975), pp.69-70; Dunn (1988), p.20; Fitzmyer (1993), p.239; Ziesler (1989), p.64. The exceptions are Witherington (1995), p.80, who denies that the cultic background has any significance for Paul's use of these terms, by which he establishes moral boundaries for the community; and Käsemann (ET 1980), pp.15-16, who wishes to avoid any connection between holiness and conduct. Witherington is certainly right that Paul's language serves to establish moral boundaries, but rather misses the point that there must first be a people for such boundaries to enclose. That Käsemann's position is untenable can be seen from 1 Thess. 4:7: οὐ γὰρ ἐκάλεσεν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεὸς ἐπὶ ἀκαθαρσίᾳ ἀλλ' ἐν ἁγιασμῷ.

[117]Proksch (ET 1964), pp.105-07.

[118]Dunn (1988), p.20; Fee (1987), pp.32-33.

[119]It is sometimes maintained, e.g. Coenen (ET 1975), that the term ἐκκλησία, used twenty two times by Paul in 1 Corinthians alone, retains it root sense of 'called out', thus contributing to this sense of separateness. It is true that the Septuagintal translators use it to render Hebrew terms referring to the assemblies of Israel, but for these terms they also use συναγωγή. Further, already for several centuries ἐκκλησία had been the name of the assembly of the competent full citizens of a polis, and this meaning could account for the adoption of the term within Christianity. In support of this, Roloff (ET 1990), pp.410-15, points out that, as at 1 Cor. 1:2, Paul frequently speaks of the ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ. If ἐκκλησία already specifically conveyed a sense of being called out by God, then this reference to God would be redundant.

about their previous behaviour, but it conveys considerable expectations as to the future.[120]

That what we have here is a description of the new people of God in terms previously applied to Israel is perhaps additionally confirmed by the Septuagintal background of the phrase κλητοὶ ἅγιοι itself. There it refers thirteen times to the sacred assembly of God's people, commanded by him, on the first and last days of the Passover celebration.[121] However, there is a marked reluctance among recent commentators to accept this reference to the Passover as relevant to Paul's usage, perhaps because the Septuagintal translators appear to misunderstand the Hebrew and, instead of giving a Greek equivalent for 'holy convocation' or 'sacred assembly', simply state that the days on which this was to meet should be 'called holy'.[122] Käsemann writes confidently that "Gentile Christians would hardly have been aware that in the LXX formula *klete hagia*, the sacred assembly is hidden behind the phrase about the elect saints."[123] This is true, but it does not necessarily mean that Paul's readers were unaware that the formula appeared in relation to the Passover. One does not need to understand the significance of the underlying Hebrew in order to know where the Greek formula occurs. At 1 Cor. 5:6-8 Paul certainly expects his readers to understand some of the procedures for celebrating Passover, since he uses them as a metaphor by which to express his desire for the church to be sexually pure. It is therefore possible that Paul might also expect his readers to catch the Passover allusion in the words κλητοὶ ἅγιοι. If so, then when he refers to his readers in this way, it does not simply indicate Paul's

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[120]Lightfoot (1895), p.145: "All who are brought within the circle of Christian influences are in a special manner Christ's, all who have put on Christ in baptism are called, are sanctified, are holy. Let them not act unworthily of their calling." Note the 'indicative - imperative' form of the summary, which in this case reflects the ethical implications of Paul's thinking based on a cultic meaning. Exceptions to this pattern in Paul's usage are 1 Cor. 7:14[2] and 1 Thess. 5:23. In the former the ethical dimension is entirely missing, whereas in the latter it is very strongly emphasised. This range of application is another indication that it would be an error to treat the cultic and ethical dimensions of these terms in an either/or fashion. See Fee (1987), p.32 n.21.

[121]Ex. 12:16, Lev. 23:2, 23:3, 23:4, 23:7, 23:8, 23:21, 23:24, 23:27, 23:35, 23:36, 23:37, Num. 28:25.

[122]Barrett, Dunn, Fee and Fitzmyer all fail to mention the Septuagintal background.

[123]Käsemann (ET 1980), p.15. Cranfield (1975), p.70 also rejects any connection. For a major commentary accepting a connection one has to go back to Sanday & Headlam (1896), pp.12-13.

application to them of Israel's mantle as the people of God. A term which previously referred to a specific cultic occasion is now applied to the whole life of the people of God, so providing us with an example of the extension of the holy into every part of life. In relation to the church, Paul takes even further the process already begun within Israel, and perhaps also provides his converts with one means of coming to terms with a new faith which, when considered from a Gentile perspective, appeared to lack a cult.

This feature of Gentile Christianity may well have been controversial. As Dunn notes, "the fact that Gentiles should count themselves ἅγιοι when they offered no sacrifices, called no man 'priest', practised no rite of circumcision, must have been puzzling to most pagans and offensive to most Jews."[124] A term previously used to set Israel apart from the nations in terms of faithful law observance (Lev. 20:22-26), now refers to churches predominantly composed of Gentiles. By applying terms denoting separateness to those who formerly counted as those to be separated from, Paul uses the concept of calling to articulate his claim that Gentiles are now part of the people of God. As he says at Rom. 9:25-26, quoting from Hos. 2:23, καλέσω τὸν οὐ λαόν μου λαόν μου.[125] In doing so, Paul not only asserts the common standing of those Jews and Gentiles who believe in Christ, but also separates his Gentile converts from those Gentiles who remain outside God's people. The fact that those are included who were previously excluded throws into even sharper relief a point on which Paul and his critics would have agreed: the call which God gives is to be part of the people which he has set apart for himself. In terms of identity, this is what it means to be called.[126]

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[124]Dunn (1988), p.20.

[125]See also Hos. 1:10

[126]Other terms which might be thought to give further expression to this idea include κλητοὶ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Rom. 1:6) and εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (1 Cor. 1:9). For discussion of these terms see p.76 and below, p.84 respectively.

3.3.5 Who is Called - Individuals or Groups?

Having argued that calling grants a new identity principally in terms of belonging to the people of God, it might be thought self-evident that the concept of calling is primarily a communal one. This is certainly true in terms of the results of calling. Paul seems little interested in calling as an individual experience, and there is no hint that its results are conceived primarily in terms of the benefits it brings to individuals. Paul never refers to an individual as a saint (ἅγιος), but speaks only of saints (ἅγιοι). He also speaks of the Corinthians as called by God εἰς κοινωνίαν τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτοῦ (1Cor. 1:9). This ambiguous genitive construction could denote calling into fellowship with Christ, or it could denote calling into the fellowship of which Christ is the head, i.e., the church. Most commentators regard each as implying the other, but there is disagreement as to where the primary emphasis falls.[127] Yet whichever meaning is primary, the form of the verb ἐκλήθητε is aorist passive second person *plural*. Even if the fellowship into which they were called is primarily with Christ it is understood in a collective rather than an individual manner, and is something which they enjoy as a community. Paul understands that *to* which people are called in predominantly communal terms.

However, in terms of what people are called *as*, the picture is very different. It is true that in 1 Cor.1:26f. Paul discusses calling in a way which stresses God's election of the socially disadvantaged but, in what has become a crucial phrase in Corinthian studies, his οὐ πολλοὶ (1:26) indicates that although there were very few in

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[127]Campbell, K.Y. (1932), p.380 takes this phrase as a genitive of the thing shared, i.e. those called share together in Christ. See also Barrett (1971b), p.40. Witherington (1995), p.89 agrees, and emphasises that this fellowship involves concrete, practical sharing of wealth and possessions. On this view the phrase primarily concerns the relationship of Christians with one another. However, such reasoning seems false. For if concrete, practical sharing among Christians is sharing Christ, then it is difficult to see any distinction between the two possible meanings. One is the other, for as one shares Christ, one is equally both in fellowship with him and with fellow Christians. However, majority opinion favours fellowship with Christ. See Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.29; Fee (1987), p.45; Godét (ET 1886), p.60; Lightfoot (1895), p.150.

the church who could claim to be wise, or powerful, or well-born, there were some.[128] Further, it is obvious that not every person who might be termed foolish, or weak, or despised, is called. Paul may understand God's calling to have a social pattern but, given that its purpose is ὅπως μὴ καυχήσηται πᾶσα σὰρξ ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ (1 Cor 1:29), it is clear that this pattern is not rigid. Its intention is to undermine any notion that social status is of ultimate significance before God, not to establish low social status as a qualification for divine approval instead of high social status. Those who are called may be drawn predominantly from certain social groups, but they are called as individuals and not as groups. When Paul discusses calling in relation to social groups in 1 Cor. 7:17-23, he nevertheless speaks in the first instance to individuals. In his rhetorical questions at 7:18 his interrogative pronouns are singular (τί, τίς),[129] and when at 1 Cor.7:21 he asks δοῦλος ἐκλήθης; the form of the verb is aorist passive second person *singular.*

When we turn to ethnic status, we find a similar emphasis on the individual. Paul does speak of Israel being called as a nation,[130] but he also speaks of Jews being called to be in Christ on the same basis as Gentiles.[131] The message of Christ crucified is a stumbling block to Jews and a folly to Greeks, but not so to τοῖς κλητοῖς, Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἕλλησιν (1 Cor. 1:24). Not only are both Jews and Greeks called, but those who are called do not share the attitude towards Christ and his cross characteristic of the ethnic groups from which they come. Although Paul does not articulate it, his various statements imply that Jewish Christians are in receipt of two callings, one which comes to them by virtue of their membership of the people of Israel, and one which brings them to be in Christ. The first of these callings comes to them as a birthright, but the second calling is always experienced by people as a historical event or

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[128]See Theissen (ET 1982), pp.70-73. For discussion of the recent challenge to Theissen from Justin Meggitt, see below, pp.197-98.
[129]See also his questions to the married at 1 Cor. 7:16.
[130]Rom. 9:7, 11:29.
[131]Rom. 9:24, 1 Cor. 1:24.

process within their own lives.[132] The first of these callings in no way reduces their need for the second, and this second calling comes to them not on the basis of their being Jewish but on the basis of their being human. Οὐ γάρ ἐστιν διαστολή, πάντες γὰρ ἥματον καὶ ὑστεροῦνται τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ (Rom. 3:22-23). God calls both Jews and Gentiles, but he does not call them because they are Jews or Gentiles. Membership of an ethnic group is no more of a qualification for divine approval than social status. Although it is given in order for those called to become part of his people, God's call to be in Christ is not conceived of by Paul as given to groups, but as given to individuals.

3.3.6 Calling and Ethnic Status

It is therefore clear that, in terms of salvation, Paul regards ethnic status as irrelevant. At Rom. 9:24, in the context of a discussion of divine election, Paul speaks of those whom God has called οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν. In doing so he seems to move beyond what is said at 1 Cor. 1:24, for the phrase ἐξ ('out of') could be taken to imply that, by virtue of being called, Christians cease to be Jews or Gentiles, something tantamount to a demand for the elimination of ethnic difference. Dunn denies this, writing that "the sense of the 'us' as a new and distinct body (cf. Eph. 2:15), let alone a 'third race', is still over the horizon."[133] This denial is perhaps insufficiently nuanced. On the one hand, Paul is certainly advocating that Jews and Gentiles be a single community in Christ, and the fact that some Jews are called but not others, some Gentiles but not others, means that at the deepest level Jews and Gentiles who are called to be in Christ have more in common with each other than with Jews or Gentiles who are not called. They are a new and distinct body in the sense that the church must become "virtually the primary group for its members, supplanting all other

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[132]Other terms are employed to speak of God's pre-historical prior knowledge and decision. Calvin (ET 1961), p.182 comments on the place of calling in the sequence of divine actions listed at Rom. 8:30, "God by his calling openly testifies to his hidden purpose." See also Barrett (1971a), pp.169-70; Cranfield (1975), p.432.

[133]Dunn (1988), p.570.

loyalties."[134] Paul's insistence that ethnic status plays no part in salvation cannot but have sociological consequences.

On the other hand, there are limits to the impact of these sociological consequences upon the ethnic identity of those who are called. Dunn is right that Paul is not demanding the adoption of a third ethnic identity. Paul can tolerate nothing which imposes Jewishness as a requirement for church membership, hence his sustained fury in Galatians towards those seeking to persuade his converts to be circumcised; yet this does not mean that he believes in a third race for to do so, far from maintaining his sense that ethnic status counts for nothing in relation to salvation, would grant it significance. Paul does not believe those called to be Christians to have ceased to be either Jews or Gentiles; his aim is not to obliterate difference.[135] This can be clearly seen in the advice he gives concerning circumcision at 1 Cor. 7:18-19.[136] His main point is an expected one, ἡ περιτομὴ οὐδέν ἐστιν, καὶ ἡ ἀκροβυστία οὐδέν ἐστιν (7:19). Whether a person is circumcised or not is unimportant but, precisely because it is not, he has already given instruction that the person who was circumcised when called must not remove the marks of circumcision, and the person who was not circumcised when called must not now become so. Paul says both μὴ ἐπισπάσθω, and μὴ περιτεμνέσθω (7:18), and with apparently no exceptions. To permit or encourage epispasm would suggest something undesirable about Jewishness, so granting significance to ethnic status

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[134]Meeks (1983), p.78. A clear expression of this distinctness comes at 1 Cor. 12:2 where, in relation to worship, Paul speaks of being Gentile in the past tense: Οἴδατε ὅτι ὅτε ἔθνη ἦτε πρὸς τὰ εἴδωλα τὰ ἄφωνα ὡς ἂν ἤγεσθε ἀπαγόμενοι.

[135]In this respect, Käsemann (ET 1980), p.273 helpfully expresses the significance of Rom. 9:24 in eschatological terms. "If the ἐξ can be related to ἐκάλεσεν, it (the church) is in fact called out of the peoples of the old aeon." Paul's relativisation of ethnic difference with regard to salvation reflects the degree to which the new aeon has arrived, his acceptance of the continuance of ethnic difference the degree to which it has still to be realised. The same is true in relation to Gal. 3:28 with its famous statement that in Christ there is neither Jew nor Greek.

[136]This advice comes in the course of Paul's discussion of marriage, and 7:17-24, where Paul digresses in order to discuss calling in relation to ethnic status and to social status, seems designed to illustrate the principles shaping his advice on marriage. There is nothing to suggest that either Jew-Gentile or slave-master relationships were currently causing problems in the church at Corinth. On the basis of Gal. 3:28, Bartchy (1973), pp.162-65 suggests that these two examples were chosen because they were regularly linked with male/female relationships in Paul's own thinking.

just as surely as did the demand of others that Gentile Christians be circumcised. Robertson and Plummer rightly comment that, "A Jew when he becomes a Christian, is not ostentatiously to drop all Jewish customs and modes of life."[137] Paradoxically, Paul issues a demand for the maintenance of ethnic distinction in order to demonstrate its ultimate insignificance. His ideal is not a church in which ethnic distinction is obliterated, but one in which it continues without defining or impairing community.[138]

3.3.7 Calling and Social Status

Such conclusions concerning ethnic distinction are not drawn from 1 Cor. 7:18-19 as often as one might expect, because at first sight they appear to have unpalatable consequences for the exegesis of 7:20-24 where Paul applies the same principles to the social status of those who are slaves.[139] At 7:21 he writes, δοῦλος ἐκλήθης; μή σοι μελέτω· ἀλλ' εἰ καὶ δύνασαι ἐλεύθερος γενέσθαι, μᾶλλον χρῆσαι. The meaning is unclear, since it is difficult to determine whether the final clause should be supplied with freedom ('instead use freedom'), or slavery ('indeed use slavery').[140] Yet, presumably, if ethnic distinctions have a positive value for Paul then so must social ones, and it initially seems as if we are pushed towards the 'use slavery' option.[141] Bornkamm summarises Paul's principles thus: "in themselves all outward

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[137]Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.146. Today the tone of this comment sounds somewhat patronising but, regarded as of its time, it displays remarkable insight.

[138]I thus disagree with Boyarin (1994), p.8 when he writes of Paul that "his system required that all human cultural specificities - first and foremost, that of the Jews - be eradicated, whether or not the people in question were willing." However, what Paul has done is to uncouple religious and ethnic identity, and so Boyarin *is* correct to point out that tolerating ethnic difference within the Christian community does not remove the offensiveness of Paul's attitude to those for whom Jewish difference is of central religious importance. While recognising that it also does not remove that offensiveness, I would hold that a verse like 1 Cor. 7:18 moves Paul a step beyond mere 'tolerance', and grants ethnic distinction a positive value within his thought even though it no longer defines religious identity. After all, ethnicity is something that God has appointed (μερίζω - 1 Cor. 7:17).

[139]E.g. Bartchy (1973), p.138, who astonishingly comments on 7:18-19 that "Paul's point is not that the changes he mentions are prohibited. Rather, he claimed that the question of religious status is not at all important."

[140]Opinion has always been split amongst scholars [Chrysostom , (ET 1839), p.253, records disagreement in his day], and this continues in the recent commentaries. For 'indeed use slavery' see Barrett (1971b), p.170 and Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.127. For 'instead use freedom' see Fee (1987), p. 315-18; Schrage (1995), pp.139-40; Witherington (1995), pp.181-85.

[141]Combes (1998), pp.56-58 argues in precisely this way. Paul allows exceptions to his advice not to seek a change in marital status, but not to his advice about ethnic status. Since the structure of his

circumstances whatsoever are no longer of importance; as regards the salvation of believers, they have basically ceased to be absolute and do not enter into religion. At the same time they are, and continue to be, of supreme importance because they denote the specific place on earth and history where Christ *has* already made believers free for a new existence."[142] Bornkamm has already concluded both that Paul wishes none of his readers to change their ethnic status, and that he wishes Christian slaves to refuse any offer of manumission. It seems that attention to the principles of Paul's argument tends to produce readings of 7:21 which favour remaining in slavery.[143] Is this connection a valid one?

Certainly it is difficult to see how Paul's statements of principle in 7:17 and 7:20 could be understood as doing anything other than assigning a similar importance to social status as to ethnic distinction. At 7:17 Paul instructs that each person is to walk ὡς ἐμέρισεν ὁ κύριος, ἕκαστον ὡς κέκληκεν ὁ θεός. The use of the verb μερίζω, with its sense of dividing or apportioning, suggests that Paul means that an individual's circumstances have been appointed by God, something which quite clearly implies divine responsibility for the position of those in slavery.[144] Further, at 7:20 Paul talks of each one remaining ἐν τῇ κλήσει ᾗ ἐκλήθη (in the calling in

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argument connects slavery and ethnic status more closely than slavery and marriage, he cannot intend an exception in relation to slavery. See below, pp.92-94, for my reasons for dissenting from this view.

[142]Bornkamm (ET 1971), p.210. Bornkamm perhaps overstates things in his second sentence, where the adjective 'supreme' rather muddies the distinction between the importance of circumstances here, and their irrelevance in relation to salvation. There is also perhaps a false distinction between outward circumstances and inward religion hovering in the background. As we saw in relation to ethnic status, Paul's approach cannot but have sociological consequences. Nevertheless, the broad thrust of Bornkamm's summary, i.e., that social circumstances are completely irrelevant in one way, but still significant in another, is correct.

[143]Harrill (1995), pp.76-77. "Most of those scholars who stress grammatical and syntactical considerations prefer the 'take freedom' option, whereas most of those who stress context prefer the 'use slavery' interpretation." Also Bartchy (1973), p.23; Dawes (1990), p.689. Combes (1998), pp.56-58 argues for 'use slavery' entirely on the basis of context, ignoring most of the grammatical issues.

[144]Despite the discomfort such a thought provokes, it is difficult to see how a monotheist could believe anything else, since God could have ordered things otherwise. Although it is far from Paul's mind, his words implicitly raise questions of theodicy. Why has God allowed some to endure slavery but spared others?

which he was called).[145] Here he seems to come close to identifying the circumstances of his readers when they became Christians as their calling. Many commentators assume that Paul does not mean what he appears to say. C.K. Barrett is representative when he writes, "Paul is not thinking primarily of a vocation to which a man is called, but of the condition in which a man is when the converting call of God comes to him and summons him to the life of Christian faith and obedience."[146] This position carries some credibility since if Paul is saying that the social circumstances of his readers are their calling, then he would be doing more than granting such circumstances significance as the location in which Christ has set the believer free to live a new existence. Given that elsewhere Paul consistently equates calling and conversion, he would be granting social status the ultimate significance which the rest of his argument appears so concerned to deny to it. Far from urging his readers not to alter their social status because it is of no ultimate importance before God, he would be urging them not to desire such change because social status is of such ultimate importance.

We are therefore left with readings of 7:20 which either strain the meaning of Paul's words in an attempt to separate calling from social circumstances,[147] or which equate the two in apparent contradiction to the rest of Paul's argument.[148] A productive hint as to the way out of this impasse is offered by Epictetus, who, as we have seen, asks hypothetical philosophers, complaining to God about their circumstances, whether this is the way in which they are going to disgrace τὴν κλῆσιν ἣν κέκληκεν (the calling which he has called).[149] Despite the differences in the tenses of the verbs and the cases of the nouns, here is a statement which combines the noun and

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[145]Bartchy (1973), pp.132-55 takes the calling in which one must remain as simply that of being a Christian. This is not credible since it would then be difficult to establish any relationship between 7:20 and either 7:18-19, or 7:21-24. Paul's examples are not concerned with remaining a Christian, but with the social circumstances in which the believer is found by Christ. See Fee (1987), p.314 n.35 & n.36.
[146]Barrett (1971b), p.168. See also Fee (1987), p.314, Lightfoot (1895), p.228; Murphy-O'Connor (1979), pp.69-70; Talbert (1987), p.41.
[147]Of which the most striking recent example is Elliott, N. (1995), pp.35-36.
[148]E.g. Héring (ET 1962), p.55: Paul "does not mean the calling which makes us Christians but that which we have to actualise by accepting our situation in life."
[149]*Diss.* 1.29.49. See above, p.67.

the verb in a way curiously similar to Paul.[150] Attention is drawn to this by Weiss, who concludes of Epictetus' use of calling that, "dieser Sprachgebrauch nähert sich also unsrem 'Beruf' an."[151] Once this connection to 'occupation' or 'profession' is established it is a short step to his conclusion that "die Lebensverhältnisse selber sind die Form, in der die besondere christliche κλῆσις an den Einzelnen ergeht, darum dürfen sie selbst κλῆσις heißen."[152]

One doubts whether Weiss has properly understood Epictetus,[153] who compares those philosophers complaining of harsh circumstances with tragic actors who confuse their costumes with themselves.[154] The philosopher must be prepared to accept the role of a person in rags as readily as that of a governor.[155] Thus, philosophy is not equivalent to an occupation or profession. It is something deeper, for whether or not one enjoys the profession of governor is irrelevant to the moral good which is within the grasp of each individual. The calling of which Epictetus speaks is a calling to be a philosopher, and not a calling to any particular set of social circumstances; yet, the philosopher cannot fulfil this calling without embracing whatever circumstances happen

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[150]In Paul the verb refers to the one called and so is aorist passive, and the noun dative; in Epictetus, the verb refers to God and so is perfect active, and the noun accusative.

[151]Weiss (1910), p.187. Epictetus' words are also noted by Lightfoot (1895), p.229; Héring (ET 1962), p.55 n.19.

[152]ibid.

[153]Deming (1995), p.167, also rejects Weiss' position. Yet rather than argue that Weiss has misunderstood Epictetus, Deming concludes that there is no genuine parallel between Epictetus' concept of calling and that of Paul. Citing Bonhöffer, he argues instead that for Epictetus calling is only an occasional commission, received from God by someone who is already a philosopher, and who must now meet a particularly challenging situation. In fact, this is not quite what Bonhöffer (1911), p.208 says, "Bei Epiktet aber ist die κλῆσις entweder eine außerordentliche göttliche Berufung zu einer außerordentlichen Lebensaufgabe, zu einem μαρτύριον, oder aber jeder durch die Umstände sich anzeigende Aufruf zur Erfüllung einer bestimmten sittlichen Pflicht." Although Epictetus does not use calling to refer back to the event of conversion to philosophy, he does use it to express what it is to be a philosopher (see above, pp.68-69). Trying circumstances do not represent merely occasional commissions - the philosopher should practise (μελετάω) suffering - *Diss.* 2.1.39. Deming also proposes that Stoicism has influenced the Corinthians, who perceive themselves to have received a call to face a trying situation, which crisis justifies abandoning their non-Christian spouses. Deming points to Epictetus, *Ench.* 7, where on receipt of a call from God, the philosopher must be ready to leave behind wife and child. However, since this applies especially to an old man (γέρων), the call which God gives seems to refer to death, not to a crisis within life.

[154]*Diss.* 1.29.41. ἔσται χρόνος τάχα, ἐν ᾧ οἱ τραγῳδοὶ οἰήσονται ἑαυτοὺς εἶναι προσωπεῖα καὶ ἐμβάδας καὶ τὸ σύρμα.

[155]*Diss.* 1.29.44-49.

to pertain. Paul's argument has the same force. The Christian slave is called to be a Christian, not a slave; yet, this calling cannot be fulfilled unless slavery is accepted. Godet is right when he insists that slavery itself is not the calling, but also that, "the idea of the call must be taken to embrace all the external circumstances which furnish the occasion and determine the manner of it."[156] The social circumstances in which a person was converted do not constitute their calling, but Paul would think that an overt concern to change them was inconsistent with the call to be in Christ.[157]

Thus, Paul is consistent in his statements of principle and, whether in relation to ethnic or social status, he teaches both that a person's circumstances cannot affect their standing before God, and that, however difficult, such circumstances are to be accepted.[158] Yet, despite this, Paul does teach that in light of τὴν ἐνεστῶσαν ἀνάγκην (7:26), some social circumstances are *relatively* better than others. He says of those who marry, θλῖψιν δὲ τῇ σαρκὶ ἕξουσιν οἱ τοιοῦτοι, ἐγὼ δὲ ὑμῶν φείδομαι (7:28). Although marriage is not in itself bad, affliction really is something undesirable and, where possible, something to be avoided rather than a test to be welcomed. Yet any afflictions brought by marriage must be accepted if one was married when one was called; they do not justify seeking change. One's calling must be lived out in the circumstances in which it was received, despite the fact that not all circumstances are equally good. This raises the question of change which comes despite its not being sought, and whether it may be accepted. The advice of 7:15 that the unbelieving spouse

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[156]Godet (ET 1886), p.356.

[157]Winter (1995), pp.159-63 offers an alternative explanation. Citing Dionysius of Harlicarnassus, 4.18, he proposes that the noun κλῆσις is a technical term meaning 'class' or 'rank' in society, so that 7:20 is simply an instruction to remain in the same social circumstances as when one was called. Dionysius claims that the Latin word *classis* was derived from κλῆσις, because when the Roman army had been called out in former times, it had arranged itself in groups according to social status. This sounds like a doubtful story (Liddell & Scott conclude their reference to it with an exclamation mark) but, even if true, for a Latin word to have its origin in Greek does not prove that the Greek word bore the same meaning. Etymological influence does not flow backwards! Winter produces no examples from Greek literature of κλῆσις having this meaning.

[158]Paul's final statement of principle at 7:24 reinforces this double focus: ἕκαστος ἐν ᾧ ἐκλήθη, ἀδελφοί, ἐν τούτῳ μενέτω παρὰ θεῷ. One is not to seek to change one's circumstances, but the preposition ἐν gives a clear distinction between these circumstances and the calling received.

desiring a divorce should not be resisted suggests that it may and, if so, then it does not necessarily follow from Paul's principles that his advice in 7:21 must be to refuse manumission. If he regards slavery as a less advantageous state in which to serve Christ, then his advice could be to accept manumission.[159]

To say this clarifies another important point, namely that although Paul's principles are consistent, the nature of his examples varies.[160] In regard to ethnic status any change is prohibited, both because in this case Paul regards the two states as absolutely equal, and because, in normal circumstances, neither circumcision nor epispasm can be an unsought change. An unbelieving spouse might decide to leave, and a master might decide to grant manumission,[161] but an individual has to seek circumcision or its reversal. We are therefore left to ask whether Paul does regard slavery as relatively less advantageous than being freed. There is nothing in Paul's advice about slavery which even hints at an answer either way,[162] but one of the reasons which he gives for preferring celibacy over marriage seems to apply equally well to freedom and slavery. If a married man or woman is anxious to please their spouse to the detriment of their devotion to the things of the Lord (7:32-35), then it is difficult to see how the same is not true of a slave wishing to please a master.[163] In relation to its context, interpreting 7:21 as in favour of accepting manumission is at least as credible as the alternative.

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[159]Note that despite his dismissive attitude towards manumission (see above, pp.69-70), Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.22.67-76 suggests that the Cynic should not marry in order to devote himself without distraction τῇ διακονίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ.

[160]See Dawes (1990), pp.694-97.

[161]As manumission was often perceived to be a reward for hard work and loyal service, the slave who took Paul's advice and did not worry about being a slave might be no less likely to receive an offer of manumission than the slave who worked hard out of a deep desire to secure manumission.

[162]*If* it is intended literally (see below, pp.96-97), then it might be thought that Paul's advice in 7:23b, μὴ γίνεσθε δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων, establishes a preference for being freed. However, were 7:21b to mean 'indeed use slavery', then Paul could simply be against change either way, as in the case of ethnic status. Only once one has already decided that 7:21b means 'rather use freedom' does a literal reading of 7:23b make slavery sound the less desirable state.

[163]To say this is not to confuse manumission with emancipation. A freedman or woman often had continuing obligations to their former master. See below, pp.95-96. Yet neither is a single person automatically freed from all family ties and obligations. It is a matter of degree.

When one adds to this the strong grammatical and syntactical grounds in favour of 'rather use freedom', then it becomes substantially the more likely option.[164] In the most recent detailed work on the subject, Harrill uses new technology to demonstrate by means of word searches that the adverb μᾶλλον is much more often adversative than intensive.[165] This adds to the force of several frequently made points, the strongest of which are that (i) in a sentence where a word has to be supplied, it is usually taken from that sentence, and so in this case ἐλεύθερος,[166] (ii) in 7:11 and 7:28 εἰ καὶ means 'if indeed' rather than 'even if', and is therefore also likely to do so here, and (iii) the ἀλλὰ with which 7:21b begins leads us to expect an exception to Paul's advice not to worry about slavery, whereas an intensification of that advice would require 'and'.[167] Thus, Paul advises those who are slaves that they should accept manumission if the opportunity presents itself.

One should not make too much of this conclusion. The relentless attention focused on 7:21b owes much to Christian embarrassment at the failure of the New Testament to condemn the institution of slavery.[168] Yet what is gained by showing

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[164]Bartchy (1973), pp.96-120 attempts to introduce another type of criterion, arguing that slaves in the ancient world could not refuse manumission, and so for Paul to have advised against it would have been pointless. This is effectively rebutted by Harrill (1995), pp.88-90 who produces evidence of some circumstances where slaves might formally decline manumission and, pp.98-99, points out that one cannot 'read off' social reality from legal convention.

[165]Harrill (1995), pp.108-21. This renders unlikely the usual opposing translation 'indeed use slavery' but, despite the fact that Harrill does not acknowledge it, still leaves open the possibility that μᾶλλον is adversative to the immediately preceding clause, where Paul mentions the opportunity of becoming free. Thus, there is no one decisive point which can determine the proper translation. The case for 'rather use freedom' is a cumulative one.

[166]This highlights a particular difficulty with the conclusion of Bartchy (1973), p.120 that "Paul was urging any person in the Corinthian congregation who had received the call (κλῆσις) of God in Christ when he was in legal and social slavery to continue to 'use' (in the sense of 'live in' or 'obey') this *call* after his manumission, i.e., in his new status as freedman." In this case the object of the verb to be supplied is κλῆσις (7:20) from *two* sentences previously.

[167]For an excellent summary of all the grammatical points in favour of supplying 'freedom' as the object of the verb see Fee (1987), pp.316-17.

[168]Bartchy (1973), p.62: "What hindered Paul or Christian slaves and Christian owners from drawing the kind of social consequences from the Gospel which were drawn by the abolitionists in the nineteenth century?" The clear implication of the question is that they ought to have drawn such consequences. Harrill (1995), p.94f. is scathingly critical of Bartchy's attempts to evade the absence of an abolitionist ethos in Paul. Perhaps most seriously, this attempt leads Bartchy to make unprovable statements asserting the humane nature of slavery in the first century, e.g., Bartchy (1973), p.72: "Most slaves were

that Paul looked favourably on manumission? In the ancient world, as distinct from the Caribbean and the American South in the nineteenth century, manumission was a regular practice. It was part of the institution of slavery, an incentive for individuals which served to maintain the institution as a whole, and for Paul to accept or encourage it does not make him a social radical.[169]

Yet that does not mean that Paul's teaching on slavery lacks sociological consequences. We concluded in relation to ethnic distinctions that Paul wished them to continue, but without defining or impairing community, and the same is true in relation to social status.[170] Paul does not expect distinctions in social status to be eradicated, but neither does he expect them to determine status within the church, or to determine who is part of the church. Evidence for this is found in 7:22, where Paul justifies his advice in 7:21 by saying, ὁ γὰρ ἐν κυρίῳ κληθεὶς δοῦλος ἀπελεύθερος κυρίου ἐστίν, ὁμοίως ὁ ἐλεύθερος κληθεὶς δοῦλός ἐστιν Χριστοῦ.[171] As Dale Martin points out, the logic of this statement is not to assert the equality of all Christians.[172] Instead it establishes an inverse relationship between social status and status in Christ. In ancient society, to be manumitted and so become a

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treated well." Bartchy also, pp.114-16, emphasises the lack of distinction in terms of economic and material well-being between being a slave and being free but poor, thus betraying a failure to grasp the strength of notions of honour as a motivating force in Graeco-Roman society.

[169]See Harrill (1995), pp.74-75.

[170]The difference is, as argued above, that whereas Paul makes no such distinction between being Jewish or Gentile, Paul does regard being free as relatively more advantageous in relation to the Christian life than slavery.

[171]Given that manumission was a perfectly normal feature of slavery to which slaves might be expected to aspire, it seems unlikely that Paul would need to explain or justify his advice that they might accept manumission. I therefore understand 7:22 to explain why it is that Christian slaves need not be concerned by their social status (7:21a).

[172]Martin (1990), pp.60-68. Many of his insightful remarks about 1 Cor. 7:22 seem to me valid whether or not one accepts his wider thesis that because slavery could be a means of upward social mobility for a minority of 'managerial' slaves, slavery to Christ could be understood as a positive metaphor for salvation as social mobility and power by association. For critical reviews see Combes (1992) and Harrill (1992). Rather than reflecting social reality, I would suggest that the positive value given to slavery to Christ within early Christianity is a deliberately counter-cultural contradiction of it. That to which society accords shame, God has accorded honour. Certainly this understanding is consistent with what Paul says about calling at 1 Cor. 1:26-31. In relation to 7:22 this means not that Paul is saying that those who are free in society but who are slaves in Christ occupy a shameful position, but that he is challenging them to embrace this way of thinking about their identity as a worthy one.

freedman or freedwoman (ἀπελεύθερος) did not emancipate a slave, replacing subservience with autonomy. There remained defined obligations to one's former master, who would now be one's patron.[173] What it did do was to raise the former slave to a higher position within the social hierarchy of a household. Thus, to say that the person who is a slave in society is a freedman or woman of the Lord, while the person free in society is his slave, grants the slave a higher status in Christ than the free person.

This may be something of a rhetorical flourish, and one wonders whether Paul really expected to find authority within the church largely in the hands of slaves. Yet the flourish very clearly makes the point that the status in Christ of those who have been called cannot be determined by their social status. "The gospel *counterbalances* the differences in worldly status."[174] A high social status does not necessarily lead to a high status in Christ, nor a low social status to a low status in Christ. Paul's rhetoric must have been enjoyed by those in the Corinthian congregation who were slaves, but one wonders how any possessing relatively high social status felt about it. They may have found difficult Paul's holding apart of social status and status in Christ, and doubtless he would have responded that they were wrong to allow human ideas about social status to determine their attitude. This seems to be the import of the instruction in 7:23b, μὴ γίνεσθε δοῦλοι ἀνθρώπων. Some take this as a literal instruction not to sell oneself into slavery in times of hardship,[175] but given that Paul speaks in such a clearly metaphorical way in 7:22 and 7:23a, one doubts that a sudden switch back to literal instruction would come unsignalled. Rather he is telling the whole congregation that they have been paid for by Christ,[176] and that therefore they should not

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[173]Martin (1990), p.33 and p.64: "Had Paul wished to emphasise the eschatological freedom of the person in Christ, he would have used the word *eleutheros*, not *apeleutheros*. The second had definite social significance in that it stressed the relationship of the freedperson with the patron." See also Duff (1928), chapter 3; Harrill (1995), p.4; Wiedemann (1987), p.28.

[174]Horrell (1996), p.160.

[175]Barrett (1971b), p.171; Bartchy (1973), pp.181-82; Martin (1990), p.66.

[176]The point that Paul is addressing the whole congregation is an important one since whereas in 7:21 he issued instructions in the second person singular, now he reverts to the second person plural. If his advice is literal, those to whom it is addressed include slaves who cannot possibly obey. See Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.149.

be enslaved to human ideas about social status,[177] ideas which he is neither endorsing nor seeking to eradicate.

Thus, Paul's teaching about social status is indeed another illustration of the same principles which shaped his advice on ethnic distinctions. Like one's ethnicity, a person's social standing has been appointed by God, and social status is therefore irrelevant to one's standing before God.[178] In these terms there is nothing to be gained by a change in status, and Christian slaves need not be concerned by their being such. Instead they should live out their calling in the social location in which they received it, accepting any resultant difficulties and afflictions. Yet, precisely because social status is to be a matter of such indifference, status within society should not determine status within the church, 7:22 suggesting an inverse relationship between the two. The life of the church is to contradict the human wisdom which accords great significance to social status, and instead demonstrate its irrelevance. Strange as it sounds to us, the acceptance of slavery, and the simultaneous refusal to allow social status to shape the life of the church, are both corollaries of the same principle. These are the main lines of Paul's teaching on social status and, for him, his advice about manumission is a secondary matter. Unlike his advice concerning ethnic distinctions, but like that on the issue of marriage, Paul does here allow an exception to his general advice against change. Although Christian slaves should not seek an advance in status, they may accept manumission if it is granted. In relation to modern scholarship, this summary implies that it is a mistake to think that in assessing his teaching on calling and social status we must choose between Paul the social conservative who endorses slavery, or Paul the social

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[177]The difficulty with a metaphorical interpretation of 7:23b is the variety and vagueness of references offered. Chrysostom (ET 1839), p.254 suggests it to mean that the slave must not obey an immoral command; Lightfoot (1895), p.230 that it refers to slavishly following the 'party-leaders' of 1:12; Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.128 relates it to slavery to sin. My suggestion is closest to that of Fee (1987), p.320: "Paul is probably reflecting once again on their penchant to let merely human wisdom ...dictate their present anxieties about the need to be free from certain social settings." This better reflects the context of Paul's statement than any of the other proposals.

[178]Presumably the implication of Paul's argument is that God does not reward or penalise people for what God has appointed.

realist who merely tolerates it because it is inevitable.[179] He simply does not think in those terms. On the one hand, Paul has no interest in the social betterment of individuals, or in notions of personal liberation, or in abolishing the institution of slavery, which was to be accepted by slaves with equanimity. On the other, he wishes the church to live in Christ, and to fulfil its calling by reflecting a set of assumptions about status derived from that reality, rather than from the status practices of Graeco-Roman society.[180]

3.3.8 Summary

In relation to the seven questions set out at the start of the chapter, we can summarise our findings in relation to Paul's concept of calling as follows:

(i) For Paul it is always God who calls, and this reflects his role as creator. Paul sometimes discusses calling in a way which directly evokes creation, and the rest of his uses of the concept are consistent with that.

(ii) As one might expect, given his emphasis on calling as creation, Paul rarely discusses a human response. The vocabulary of calling is used largely to denote the divine dimension of conversion.

(iii) Paul perceives his call to apostleship as having granted him a distinctive task. This distinguishes his calling from that of his converts, whose calling

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[179]Bartchy (1973), p.1. Even more anachronistic is Elliott, N. (1995), pp.32-52 who takes the 'instead use freedom' reading of 7:21, and the reading of Philemon which understands Paul to be advocating the manumission ('release') of Onesimus, as evidence that Paul held a more hostile attitude towards slavery than is usually supposed. However, this argument confuses manumission with emancipation. See above, pp.95-96.

[180]This double focus perhaps explains why some modern readers of Paul find his social attitudes to be radical, and others reactionary. Indeed, for all the meaning of 7:21b is a legitimate object of scholarly attention, one wonders whether the relentless interest in it, and the comparative neglect of the striking words of 7:22 do not at some level represent an avoidance strategy on the part of modern Christian scholars. After all, the abolition of slavery means that manumission is not a live issue in western society, but the question of whether it is right for the life of the church to reflect the status assumptions of that society remains relevant if neglected. Confronted by attempts to either convict or acquit Paul of uncritically endorsing ancient slavery, one is reminded of the dictum that "retrospective indignation is also a way to justify the present." Finley (1980), p.64, quoting P. Bordieu.

grants them a new identity understood primarily in terms of who they have become rather than what they are to do. Yet both those callings are united by their interconnected places in the unfolding of God's purposes.

(iv) Paul's converts have become the people of God, set apart by him. This is the purpose of their calling, and its maintenance demands that their 'set apartness' be instantiated in moral practice.

(v) This calling to be part of God's holy people is primarily addressed to individuals, and not to existing groups or communities.

(vi) Nevertheless, the calling to be part of God's people does not mean that previous communal identities must be completely cast aside. Ethnic distinctions are irrelevant to a person's standing before God, and they must not impair or define the new community of the church, but they remain of significance as the locations in which the members of God's people received their calling and must live it out. There is nothing to be gained by changing one's ethnic status, and Paul prohibits it.

(vii) Paul has a similar attitude towards social status. Such status has continued significance as the location in which the members of God's people receive and live out their calling. An advance in status should not be sought, but may be accepted. Yet it is irrelevant to a person's standing before God, and status within the church should not be determined by status within society.

3.4 Conclusions

3.4.1 Paul and Calling: Distinctive Use of a Concept

The relationship between this summary of Paul's use of καλέω κτλ. and our earlier findings concerning calling in the Septuagint and in Graeco-Roman

philosophy is not a simple one. In some cases there are major similarities, in others major differences and, in yet others, partial parallels and precedents:

(i) Unsurprisingly, Paul's understanding of the God who calls is fundamentally the same as that found in the Septuagint, something illustrated by the shared understanding that in calling God reveals himself as the one who creates. Although Epictetus is far from sharing this perspective, and has a very different formal understanding of God, he discusses God in surprisingly personal terms.[181]

(ii) The Septuagint conceives of God's calling as demanding a response, but Paul largely uses responsive language elsewhere, leaving the impression of calling as a decisive act of God. Yet although only the Septuagint uses such language in relation to καλέω κτλ., it, Paul and Diogenes Laertius all frame ideas about response in terms of hearing and/or obeying.

(iii) Paul believes that God calls apostles to a task, and apostleship is the only task in relation to which he uses the language of calling. Epictetus is equally consistent with his emphasis on the duty of the philosopher to be a witness for the truth, but the Septuagint is marked by diversity, with Cyrus, Abraham and Israel all being given very different tasks to perform.

(iv) Paul conceives calling as granting a new identity as part of the people of God. In doing so he again draws upon the Septuagint, where God calls his people back to him, and back to their true identity. This concept of calling to be a people is completely lacking in Epictetus, for whom calling always concerns a task to be fulfilled by an individual.

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[181] Bonhöffer (1911), pp.37-38 may be correct to focus on the task given to the philosopher, but his characterisation of Epictetus' God as a clinical 'Feldherr' fails to do justice to the warmth of Epictetus' references to God.

(v) Yet despite the contrast between this emphasis, and that of Paul on the communal results of calling, there is also similarity with Epictetus in that Paul understands God's call as one addressed to individuals. Here the Septuagint also provides partial precedent in the shape of Cyrus and Abraham, but partial contrast in the central importance of the call addressed to God's already constituted people, Israel.

(vi) Ethnicity is of major importance in relation to calling both in Paul and the Septuagint. Second Isaiah extends God's concern beyond the borders of Judaism in that Israel is called to be a light to the Gentiles, and in that Cyrus is called and used even though he is not aware of it. However, Paul decisively changes the significance of ethnicity in relation to calling, rendering it irrelevant in terms of who is called but maintaining its importance as the appointed location of a person's calling.

(vii) Social status is of importance in relation to calling both for Paul and Epictetus. Their attitudes are fundamentally similar in stressing that any social position must be accepted as a legitimate one in which to live out a calling, but different in that Paul expects the ultimate irrelevance of status distinctions to be instantiated in the life of a community whereas Epictetus does not.

These seven points suggest that in comparison to the Septuagint, Paul is much more consistent and concrete in the way he employs the concept of calling. All who are called know they have been called, all who are called are to become part of God's people, a few are granted a particular role as apostles to be the instruments through which others are called, while both ethnic and social distinctions are relativised in significant ways. Paul has used language from a prophetic genre in a less allusive, more historical and personal way. It is hard to imagine the Jewish readers of Isaiah being asked δοῦλος ἐκλήθης;[182] Such a question expects individuals to be able to look back

[182]1 Cor. 7:21

and identify their own circumstances when they were called. Given that we are talking about Jewish readers, it would be very odd if we were to find such an expectation on the part of those included in the calling of the Jewish nation by birth. Yet although there is no evidence that Paul would expect each convert to be able to name a specific place and moment, for him calling does have a time and a location; above all, it does mark the transfer to being in Christ. By applying the concept of calling to the event of coming to be in Christ, Paul both introduces the need for a fresh call of God to those who are Jews, and individualises calling. These are consequences of using calling as a means to denote conversion.

Some of the same distinctive factors in Paul's concept of calling also stand out in comparison with Epictetus. One could scarcely say that Epictetus' use of calling is less consistent than Paul's or less personal, or that it is more allusive; yet, like the Septuagint, Epictetus is also less historical than Paul. Calling expresses something essential about what it is to be a philosopher, but it is not used to refer back to a conversion event or process. Nor are the hardships associated with the calling to philosophy ever anecdotal. Epictetus does not describe the sufferings of real philosophers, but theoretical ones, and this grants his concept of calling a slightly abstract quality. This sense of detachment fits the ideals of Epictetus' philosophy, and it surfaces again in an area where Paul and Epictetus otherwise display strong similarities. Both believe that a person can pursue their calling in any social circumstances, and neither wish to sweep status distinctions out of society. Instead they declare in favour of an alternative ultimate reality, locating freedom beyond society rather than within it. The difference is that for Paul the Christian community is an extension of that ultimate reality in this world, and therefore social distinctions are ideally irrelevant in its life. There is an activism here and a demand to re-order current reality which is alien to Epictetus, for whom to fulfil one's calling is to *respond* appropriately to trying circumstances, to demonstrate that all such realities are a matter of indifference. Again one feels that the root cause of such differences is Paul's *historical* use of calling to denote conversion.

The significance of this is further demonstrated by a Jewish text which employs καλέω κτλ. in a manner much closer to that of Epictetus than to that of Paul. In 4 Maccabees,[183] the story is told of a Jewish family who preferred martyrdom to acquiescing in the demands of Antiochus Epiphanes that they break the Jewish law. The martyrs are presented as displaying loyalty not only to Jewish principles, but also to those of Stoicism. The author "in many passages adopts Stoic language and echoes Stoic views."[184] Indeed the whole thesis of the work is that devout reason is the master of all the passions.[185] At 4 Macc. 11:20 one of the martyrs declares the sacredness of the contest of suffering to which he and his brothers have been called,[186] and at 4 Macc. 16:16 their mother declares that this contest is one they have been called to in order to bear witness for the nation and to fight for the ancestral law.[187] Here is the indifference to torture and death of which Epictetus speaks, the emphasis on bearing witness and the role of God in giving the calling, the sense that to be called is to receive a summons; and all as part of a contest depicted "largely as *single combat* between each martyr and the King."[188] Understandably in the context of a story concerning Gentile persecution of Jews, the author displays none of Paul's radicalism in terms of the identity of those whom are called. God calls Jews. This means that despite the fact that the martyrs' suffering is on behalf of the nation, their calling is exclusively an individual one to perform this task, not to become God's people, for this they already are. In short, they are not converts, and it is driven home yet one more time that what distinguishes Paul's use of καλέω κτλ. beyond all else, and what shapes all its other patterns, is that it denotes conversion.

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[183]4 Maccabees is probably a Diaspora text of the late first century. See Barclay (1996), pp.448-49.
[184]Anderson (1985), p.538.
[185]See 4 Macc. 1:1.
[186]ὁ δὲ βασανιζόμενος ὦ ἱεροπρεποῦς ἀγῶνος, ἐλεγεν, ἐφ᾽ ὃν διὰ τὴν εὐσέβειαν εἰς γυμνασίαν πόνων ἀδελφοὶ τοσοῦτοι κληθέντες οὐκ ἐνικήθημεν.
[187]Ὦ παῖδες γενναῖος ὁ ἀγών, ἐφ᾽ ὃν κληθέντες ὑπὲρ τῆς διαμαρτυρίας τοῦ ἔθνους ἐναγωνίσασθε προθύμως ὑπὲρ τοῦ πατρῴου νόμου.
[188]Barclay (1996), p.375. His italics.

This distinctive element, which stands out both against earlier biblical usage and that of Stoic philosophy, suggests the answer to one of our original questions, namely whether Paul used καλέω κτλ. in the sense of 'to name', or in the sense of 'to summon'. Klein opts for the former, arguing that, "the causative component present in the sense of the term seems to stress the act of 'appointment to salvation,' irrespective of any considerations of human response, rather than 'summons' which implicitly includes some response."[189] He is certainly right to note Paul's lack of emphasis on human response, but one doubts that it follows that the sense of 'summons' is automatically ruled out. While there is indeed the sense of intimacy with God implied by the idea of naming, the fact that to be called is to be converted means that it also initiates a new identity in terms of belonging to a community. Together with all the ethical consequences which flow from it, this supplies the sense of urgency implied by the idea of a summons. One suspects that part of the appeal held by this vocabulary for Paul was the opportunity it offered to meld existing categories of meaning into distinctive ones specific to his new faith. Even as he reproduced previous and contemporary meanings, Paul transformed them.[190]

3.4.2 Calling and Practical Consciousness

As we have seen, the two areas of social life specifically discussed by Paul in relation to calling are ethnicity and social status, and it is difficult to overemphasise the shift in practical consciousness which acceptance of his teaching would entail. To their friends and neighbours, Gentile Christians may not have appeared all that different from any other groups of Jewish sympathisers. However, the self-understanding urged on them by Paul, in which both they and Jewish Christians had been called into the fellowship of Christ, replaced ethnicity with faith in Christ as the boundary

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[189]Klein (1984), pp.63-64.

[190]Paul's creative use of language, modifying conventional networks of meaning in order to express his new faith, is something I also pursue in relation to his use of forensic and participatory terms and categories. See **2.2**, **4.3.4**, **5.3.2**, **Appendix 2**.

which defined community. The alien other was no longer Jewish but unbelieving. Yet as Paul's advice against both Gentile circumcision and Jewish removal of the marks of circumcision implies (1 Cor. 7:18), one cannot demonstrate that ethnic distinctions are nothing by simply allowing one ethnicity to engulf another. The presumption is established that ethnic differences must not divide those who are in Christ, but also that one group of Christians may not simply impose their practices on others. The details of how this new element of practical consciousness found expression in such sensitive areas as table fellowship, Sabbath observance, marriage, attitudes towards other worships etc. are usually frustratingly beyond our reach, Paul himself providing a good deal of what little we know (Gal. 2; Rom. 14-15, perhaps 1 Cor. 8-10). One can only imagine that the difficulties might be considerable.

The same is true in relation to social status. Considerable practical difficulties must surely follow from Paul's insistence that while Christians are to accept the status realities of Graeco-Roman society, they are simultaneously not to allow these realities to define status within the church. How were two individuals to conduct their relationship who were slave and master in terms of their social status, but who, according to Paul (1 Cor. 7:22), were also the Lord's freedman and a slave of Christ respectively? How were church and society to be held apart? The letter of Philemon with its carefully chosen phrases suggests the complexity of the task. How too did Paul expect the life of the church to give expression to an alternative set of status assumptions without its very existence coming to be seen as a threat by society at large? Whether or not there ever were satisfactory workable answers to such questions, a new behaviour-shaping presupposition has been established. For those who are in Christ, this fact is to be the fundamental boundary of their social world, not the fact that some are slaves and some masters. The alien other are the unbelieving, not those of a different social status.

It is clear from both these examples that in using calling to denote conversion, Paul has developed a powerful conceptual tool by which to maintain the

boundaries of the Christian community. The ties that bind those within the church to each other are to be stronger than the ties between themselves and any outside. This is a fundamental consequence of the fact that God has called them to be his people, and it means that their relationship with one another and their relationship with him are inextricably linked. 'How would this action affect my relationship with God?' and 'How would this action affect my relationship with my brothers and sisters in Christ?' become crucial and connected questions in assessing the appropriateness of behaviour. Thus Paul's concept of calling yields the building blocks of a new practical consciousness, and, as it does so, both separates and joins. Irrespective of who or what they have been, those called to be saints are separated from their own pasts, but included in a new future; separated from those who do not share their calling, but joined to those who do.

4

Gentile Conversion

4.1 Introduction

Having examined one of the principal terminologies used by Paul to denote conversion, it is desirable to balance that approach with an examination of specific passages where he discusses conversion. To that end this chapter will focus on passages which feature Gentile conversion. This will enable further exploration of similar themes to those discussed in the previous chapter (**3**), and also provide a basis for comparison when the next chapter (**5**) moves on to examine passages where Paul speaks of his own experience as a Jew who came to believe in Christ. These two chapters are therefore framed by the question of whether Paul conceives Gentile and Jewish conversion identically, or whether there are differences. Our consideration of ethnic status in relation to calling (**3.3.6**) suggested identity in certain respects, namely the irrelevance of ethnic status in determining who is called, and parity of esteem for Jew and Gentile in the life of the church. Yet it does not necessarily follow that Paul understands his own past life and that of his Gentile converts in identical ways. One of the concerns of the present chapter will therefore be Paul's attitude toward Graeco-Roman society as revealed by his statements about the conversion of Gentiles.

The passages selected as vehicles for exploring the theme of Gentile conversion are 1 Cor. 14:20-25 and 1 Cor. 6:9-11. These two texts complement each other in a number of ways. 14:20-25 concerns the conversion of an individual, whereas 6:9-11 refers to that of Paul's Corinthian readers collectively. 14:20-25 describes the event of a conversion, whereas 6:9-11 contrasts the position of Paul's Gentile converts before their conversion with their position after it. 14:20-25 portrays a hypothetical conversion depicting not what Paul believed had happened in any actual case(s) of

conversion, but instead what he considered *ought* to happen;[1] 6:9-11 relates to his actual converts, and does so as the climax of a passage where Paul exposes a gap between their actual behaviour and that which he believes should have been implied by their conversion. Further, 14:20-25 and 6:9-11 employ different vocabulary and yet, it will be contended, display similar concerns. In particular, one of the major themes of this thesis, that of the importance of unrecognised sin to Paul's understanding of conversion emerges from both passages. One of the terms found in 6:9-11 is the verb δικαιόω, another of the principal terms used by Paul to denote conversion. Examination of its use here both develops the suggestion that in relation to conversion Paul uses traditional language in new and creative ways (see **3.4.1**), and prepares the ground for further exploration of righteousness terminology (**5.3.2** and **Appendix 2**).

4.2 The Secrets of the Heart Laid Bare - 1 Cor. 14:20-25

These verses have received much scholarly attention, and yet surprisingly little heed has been paid to the dramatic conversion which Paul pictures in vv.24-25. Instead, effort has largely been directed to two other areas. Firstly, there is the admittedly difficult and perplexing question of the relationship between Paul's statement of principle in v.22 and the examples which he gives to illustrate it. Paul states that tongues are a sign for unbelievers and prophecy for believers but, on a first reading (and perhaps on subsequent ones as well!), the examples he gives seem to prove the opposite, and this has provoked much in the way of exegetical gymnastics.[2] Secondly, there is also the wider question of what these verses might tell us about the subject under discussion in the chapter as a whole, which is the relationship between the gifts of tongues and

[1]Allowance must be made for Paul's need to construct a picture of conversion which fitted his current argument, an argument which sought to demonstrate the superiority of prophecy over tongues. Even so, the hypothetical nature of the conversion described in 14:20-25 makes these verses highly valuable in reconstructing Paul's views on conversion.

[2]E.g. Johansen (1979), whose article contains many interesting observations, but whose central argument that 1 Cor. 14:22 should be read as a rhetorical question has, to my knowledge, been followed only by Talbert (1987), pp.87-88. The *οὖν* of v.23, which makes what follows stand as a consequence of the words of v.22 rather than as a denial of them, is generally held to be fatal to his argument.

prophecy and their respective places in the worship of the church. Yet a better line of approach can be found via the recognition that vv.20-25 first and foremost concern conversion. For Paul, conversion provides a criterion against which the gifts of tongues and prophecy can be evaluated, and the signs of v.22 operate in relation to questions of conversion. That conversion indeed plays an important role in Paul's wider discussion of the relative worth of tongues and prophecy is confirmed by the observation that vv.20-25 form the climax of that argument. The Τί οὖν ἐστιν, ἀδελφοι; of v.26 heralds not more discussion, but instead practical instructions concerning the conduct of worship based on what has been argued previously. Paul therefore clearly regards the discussion of conversion in vv.20-25 as having clinched his argument.[3]

It does so by demonstrating that prophecy is an adequate agent of conversion whereas speaking in tongues is not. "The great deficiency of the gift of tongues is that it fails to make clear the fundamental proposition, Jesus is Lord. Tongues are thus a quite inadequate evangelistic agency."[4] So, presumably, it is their unintelligibility, the same factor that prevents them from building up the church (14:1-5), which is the primary reason why Paul does not believe that tongues can convert an outsider. A further indication of this is that when Paul turns to practical instruction on the conduct of worship he does not forbid speaking in tongues altogether, but allows it in cases where there is interpretation and hence ultimate intelligibility (14:27). Prophecy is superior because it can communicate in a way that leads to conversion, a way that in Paul's view touches the individual outsider much more deeply and directly than simply hearing tongues ever can. With good reason we shall concentrate on the account in vv.24&25 of the response of the outsider who hears prophecy.

Yet there is also another level to Paul's debate with the Corinthian Christians. Paul's call in v.20 for them to be mature rather than childish in their thinking echoes the language of 1 Cor. 3:1, where he makes his cutting accusation that they are

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[3]See Richardson, W. (1986), p.146.
[4]Barrett (1971b), p.326.

'babes in Christ'. The person who esteems tongues over prophecy has a substantially different view of what it is to be a Christian, of what counts as spiritual maturity, from the person who takes the opposite view. Thus, the debate as to which gifts of the Spirit can produce conversion has implications for the way in which conversion and its consequences are understood. Paul's wider argument concerning the relationship between the gifts of tongues and prophecy, and the puzzle of the relationship between his statement of principle in v.22 and the examples which follow, remain extremely relevant to this debate and its implications. It is clear that Paul is attempting to revise the Corinthians' estimation of tongues downwards, but not clear whether the high value which the Corinthians currently place on this gift is something which reflects a more widespread positive evaluation of ecstatic speech acts within Graeco-Roman society and religion. The traditional translation of the exclamation μαίνεσθε (14:23) with which the outsider responds to the experience of hearings tongues suggests not. 'You are mad' is scarcely a reaction which implies that the outsider finds tongues an attractive phenomenon.[5]

However, I have argued elsewhere that a better translation is 'You are inspired.'[6] If I am right, then it is likely that the reaction of the outsider to the experience of hearing tongues is a positive one, and by questioning its desirability Paul is implicitly raising the issue of how converts to Christianity are to relate to the dominant values of the wider society from which they have come and in which they still live. If their

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[5]AV, RSV, REB. The GNB opts for 'You are crazy', the NIV and NRSV for the slightly more ambiguous 'You are out of your mind.'

[6]Unpublished paper presented to the Paul seminar of the British New Testament Conference, Leeds 1997. It is extremely difficult to find an appropriate English translation for μαίνεσθε simply because, in ancient society, mental illness and divine inspiration were opposite sides of the same coin. Dodds (1951), p.68: "The dividing line between common insanity and prophetic madness is in fact hard to draw." Given that Paul uses the verb in relation to worship, it seems unlikely that he is warning that observers will consider the believers to be on the same level as victims of 'common insanity.' Instead, he is worried lest displays of 'prophetic madness' convey a wrong impression as to the nature of the gospel. Outsiders may have found the gift of tongues awe-inspiring, perhaps even disturbing, but certainly not contemptible. See Martin (1991), and Johnson (1998), p.125: "For those seeing and hearing the tongue-speakers, the phenomenon was undoubtedly impressive." Tongues thus serve as a positive sign for unbelievers, but a limited one. They indicate to outsiders in a general way the presence of divine activity among the believers, but do nothing to enable an outsider to distinguish between the Christian God and the gods of Graeco-Roman religion.

experience of the gifts of the Spirit, and of tongues in particular, are central to the way in which the Corinthians understand their faith in Christ, then they may consider tongues to be quite adequate agents of conversion. Outsiders are attracted into the church because they perceive speaking in tongues to be a high status activity, offering a socially attractive experience of transformation. However, this is undesirable from Paul's perspective because, for him, such a transformation does not truly constitute conversion. It does not require those experiencing it to radically call into question either who they have previously been as individuals, or the social values of the society from which they come. Instead, they can simply regard themselves as having progressed (see **7.1**). For Paul, this is shallow, and conversion requires something deeper and more traumatic in terms of revaluation. In order to explore what this is, we must turn to the account in vv.24-25 of the response of the outsider who hears prophecy.

4.2.1 Prophecy as an Agent of Conversion

In 1 Cor. 14:20-25 Paul portrays conversion as the result of the secrets of an individual's heart being laid bare (φανερόω) through prophecy. The outsider is convicted (ἐλέγχω) by all and examined (ἀνακρίνω) by all. Given these striking results, the question arises of the nature of the prophecy. Does it convict the outsider because it is specifically addressed to that individual, or does it do so despite ostensibly being addressed to someone else and/or being about something else? At this point most commentators become safely vague, but Héring boldly states that, "Here, then, there is certainly involved the phenomenon of thought-reading by the prophets in a state of inspiration."[7] Barrett responds to this dismissively, "There is no need to see here (as e.g. Héring does) a miraculous gift of thought-reading. The moral truth of Christianity ...the prophetic word of God ...are sufficient to convict a sinner. God's word effects its entrance through the conscience, and then creates religious conviction."[8] In fact, there are problems with both positions. Barrett's eagerness to protect Christianity from

[7]Héring (ET 1962), p.152.
[8]Barrett (1971b), p.326.

dependence upon the miraculous in the creation of religious conviction is anachronistic both in terms of the beliefs of early Christians, and in terms of Graeco-Roman society, for "the very concept 'miracle', as used in its modern sense, is not an ancient category (implying, as the modern term does, a 'natural/supernatural' dichotomy that is not available until the modern period.)"[9] Yet, Héring's belief in thought-reading simply assumes the answer to another major question concerning these verses. If the prophets could read the thoughts of the outsider, this implies that the secrets of his or her heart were fully conscious, i.e., he or she knew what they were. The possibility of knowledge about the self, hidden from the self, is simply discounted.

To many, as to Héring, this may appear self-evident, but it becomes far from clear when considered in relation to another passage where Paul uses very similar language. In 1 Cor. 4:1-5 Paul appears to be responding to criticism from some at Corinth of his performance as an apostle.[10] He disputes their competence to examine him upon such matters, arguing instead that it is the Lord who examines (ἀνακρίνω) him, upon whose coming the things now hidden in the darkness will be brought to light (φωτίζω), and the purposes of the heart disclosed (φανερόω) (vs.4b-5). However, more striking still than this resemblance in vocabulary is Paul's statement in v.4a that οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ δεδικαίωμαι. Paul here not only rejects his own competence to judge himself, but also clearly raises the possibility of his having sinned without realising it. As Theissen suggests, the idea of unconscious sin and that of eschatological judgement reinforce each other. "Precisely this idea of a - theoretically possible - unconscious guilt is then underlined by the concluding eschatological reservation. The eschatological judge will bring to light not only hidden deeds (as in 2 Cor. 5:10) but also the hidden intentions of the heart (τὰς βουλὰς τῶν καρδιῶν) - precisely what, in view of the preceding claim of innocence, must have been unconscious."[11] Given this, and given the close resemblance in vocabulary between the

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[9]Martin, (1991), p.559 n.22.
[10]For a full discussion of this passage see **5.4**.
[11]Theissen (ET 1987), p.61.

two passages,[12] it becomes quite possible that the 'secrets of the heart' of 1 Cor.14:25 are hidden from the individual concerned as well as from others.[13]

A possible objection to this conclusion would be to ask how any individual could recognise him or herself as the subject of such a prophecy if the 'secrets of their heart' had up until the present been hidden from them as well as from others. How could they identify themselves when the information they are being given concerns truths about their lives of which they are unaware? Do they not need to be told that the prophecy concerns them? In fact, this is not such a serious problem as it first appears. Many converts in different times and places have witnessed to a subsequent feeling that what they now know about their past lives ought to have been obvious to them all along. Biographical reconstruction, i.e., the formation of a radically different estimation of the story of their own lives from that held prior to conversion, is cited by sociologists as one of the characteristics typically displayed by converts.[14] Paul's own refusal to acquit himself despite his lack of knowledge of any sin could simply allow for the possibility not that he has done things without knowing it, but rather that he has done things which he knew about, but which he did not realise were sinful.[15] The secrets of the heart are hidden not in the sense that they are unknown, but in the sense that they are unrecognised. This is exactly how Calvin understands the 'secrets of the heart' of the outsider. He writes of v.24, "the consciences of men are sleepy and inactive, and untroubled by a sense of dissatisfaction with their sins, so long as they are enveloped in the darkness of ignorance." The outsider, "comes to a realisation of what he is like, a knowledge which was denied him before ...his conscience is stirred so that he knows his sins, which were hidden from him before."[16]

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[12]1 Cor. 4:5 has τὰ κρυπτὰ τοῦ σκότους and τὰς βουλὰς τῶν καρδιῶν, while 1 Cor. 14:25 has τὰ κρυπτὰ τῆς καρδίας.
[13]See Theissen (ET 1987), p.79.
[14]See **1.2**.
[15]It is here that Theissen's desire to find evidence in Paul of a concept of the unconscious parallel to that of modern psychology becomes problematic. I use the term unconscious in its more general sense, simply to indicate that of which someone is not aware.
[16]Calvin (ET 1960), p.299.

If further evidence is needed that the secrets of the heart do indeed concern sin, then it is provided by Paul's statement that the outsider is ἐλέχεται ὑπὸ πάντων, ἀνακρίνεται ὑπὸ πάντων (v.24). Although this is the only occasion on which Paul uses ἐλέγχω, there can be little doubt that it means to convict of sin. Of its 17 other uses in the New Testament it specifically relates to sin, or to works, on 10 occasions[17] and on another 5 it seems to bear the sense of 'reprove' or 'rebuke', so that although sin is not directly mentioned, it is certainly implied.[18] Only twice does it have the distinctly different sense of convincing or confuting someone in argument.[19] Ἀνακρίνω means "to examine, investigate, enquire into, question."[20] Paul uses it only in 1 Corinthians, where he deploys it in a variety of contexts,[21] taking advantage of the flexibility of meaning implied by the definition above. However, an ἀνάκρισις was originally a pre-trial hearing or investigation conducted by magistrates, designed to determine whether or not there was a case to answer, and the general sense of the term developed from this root by metaphorical extension.[22] In 4:1-5 Paul sticks close to the original sense by contrasting the preliminary investigations of the present with the final judgement of the coming day of the Lord. The close connection of these verses with 14:24-25 makes it likely that the sense of ἀνάκρινω is similar in both cases, and so we have another confirmation of the primarily ethical nature of the secrets of the heart.[23] Through prophecy, the conscience of the outsider is sensitized to previously unrecognized sin. Paul provides his readers with a picture of conversion caused by the decisive impact of prophecy on a previously untroubled mind.[24] Conversion is not in the first instance a move from a state of crisis to a state of contentment, but the opposite.

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[17]Mt 18:15, Lk 3:19, Jn 3:20, Jn 8:46, Jn 16:8, Eph. 5:11, Eph. 5:13, 1 Tim 5:20, Jam. 2:9, Jude 15.
[18]2 Tim 4:12, Tit 1:9, Tit 1:13, Heb 12:5, Rev 3:19.
[19]Tit. 1:9, Jude 22.
[20]Lightfoot (1895), p.182.
[21]1 Cor 2:14, 2:15, 4:3, 4:4, 9:3, 10:25, 10:27, 14:24.
[22]Lightfoot (1895), p.182.
[23]We shall find an equally strong emphasis on the ethical aspects of conversion in 1 Cor. 6:9-11.
[24] Compare Epictetus, *Diss.* 3.23.30-38. Although the activity which causes the effect is different, Epictetus argues that the student of philosophy should leave the lecture room in pain rather than pleasure precisely because he has been brought to "a realization of the state he was in."

If this is correct, then there is a considerable range of possibilities as to the nature of the information contained in the prophecy. On the one hand, it need not necessarily be specifically addressed to the individual outsider; on the other, the content needs to be exact enough for an outsider to be able to recognise previously hidden truths about his or her own life. Something more precise than the sort of general proclamation apparently envisaged by Barrett is required, but not necessarily a detailed revelation of the particular sins of a named individual. Some knowledge about the person is revealed to the rest of those present but this could simply be by means of the dramatic reaction of the individual, vividly described in v.25. It is this reaction which demonstrates to whom the prophecy applied. It need not involve the naming of names, but it has missed its mark if no-one acknowledges that it is in fact about them. Thus, if we are to approach the question in the sort of modern terms used by Héring and Barrett, the most accurate description of the nature of the information contained in the prophecy would be quasi-miraculous. That the truths revealed were hidden from the individual concerned arguably indicates, when viewed from the perspective of faith, an even more penetrating insight than mere thought-reading; yet from a more critical viewpoint it also leaves the supernatural insight involved less verifiable.

4.2.2 Social and Communal Aspects of Conversion

The confession of the outsider at 14:25 that ὁ θεὸς ἐν ὑμῖν ἐστιν is generally taken to be a deliberate reference to Is. 45:14 where one finds a similar confession being made by Gentiles in relation to Israel.[25] If we are right to regard Paul as an eschatological thinker, who viewed his mission to the Gentiles in the light of an imminent end, then here is an indication that conversion too must be discussed within an eschatological framework. Given the close links we have seen between 4:1-5 and 14:24-

[25]See Barrett (1971b), pp.326-27; Fee (1987), p.687. Wilk (1998), pp.330-33 argues that Paul connects "das Motiv des „Hereinkommens" der Besucher in 1 Kor. 14:23b.24b mit dem vom „Durchzug" der Heiden in Jes. 45:14a." Zech. 8:23 is also routinely cited. The verbal resemblance with Paul is not as close as in Isaiah, but the point is the same, i.e., Gentiles confess the presence of God in Israel. Paul's description of the outsider falling upon his or her face also reflects Old Testament vocabulary. Fee, ibid: "This is biblical language for obeisance and worship."

25, the eschatological context of the former is another such indication. Indeed, given that in 1 Cor. 14:25 prophecy brings to light similar things to those exposed by final judgement in 1 Cor. 4:1-5, it rather appears as if the former to some degree anticipates the latter.[26] In conformity with Paul's characteristic eschatological tension between the 'already' and the 'not yet' of the new age, conversion involves the revealing of a partial self-knowledge to the outsider, who experiences in conversion what would otherwise be hidden until the end. Thus, contained in the picture Paul draws of conversion there is a sense that it is a judgement upon the individual concerned during which the (unpleasant) truth is revealed. Yet the result of that process is not condemnation, but the possibility of a new life.

What the sins revealed might have been is something Paul does not tell us. We do not know for certain whether failure to recognise as such the sins now exposed through prophecy was purely an individual aberration, or whether the behaviour concerned would have been judged acceptable when considered by the standards of Graeco-Roman society. For several reasons one suspects the latter. It makes it easier to understand how Paul's hypothetical convert could previously have failed to recognise his or her actions as sinful and, if I am right that Paul's assertion of the superiority of prophecy over tongues stands in contradiction to the cultural preferences of Graeco-Roman society, fits more closely with the pattern of Paul's wider argument. Further, the description of the conversion which Paul provides sets the church in contrast to the wider world. The exposing of the secrets of the heart which evokes the confession of 14:25 comes only after the outsider has entered the sphere of Christian worship. The scriptural background of this confession was noted above, and it is clear that Paul has in mind the entry of the Gentiles into the people of God. By believing in Christ, the convert becomes part of a chosen people which is distinct from wider Graeco-Roman society and, in doing so, rejects the values of that society which had informed behaviour

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[26]Wilk (1998), p.332 suggests that Paul here conceives prophecy as an event "das die Präsenz des Geistes anzeigt und Gottes endgültige Offenbarung bei der Parusie antizipiert."

previously regarded as acceptable, but now recognised as sinful. Although we have no indications from this text as to precisely which areas of conduct are concerned this clearly implies a change in practical consciousness, with behaviour which would previously have been deemed competent now recognised as a lapse in competence.

It is fascinating that here we see this communal process as Paul imagines it to impact on an individual. 1 Cor. 14:20-25 provides us with a close-up, as if through a zoom lens, of the inclusion of the Gentiles in God's people. It is significant that what we then see, in the secrets of the heart revealed to the outsider, concerns sin. It indicates that far from being pursued separately from issues of individual conscience, the place of the Gentiles in the people of God is connected to them. If no individuals are convicted of sin in the way that Paul describes, then the inclusion of the Gentiles in the people of God cannot take place. It is perhaps therefore not surprising that at the point of conversion Paul imagines a confession which is as much about the church as it is about God. The church is where He is to be found, and not outside. The self-knowledge which is revealed to the convert is shared by all within the community, thus creating a tie between the convert and the other members of the church which does not exist between the convert and those outside, even those with whom he or she previously had the closest of relationships. Again, this implies a shift in practical consciousness since it is now to operate primarily in the context of the community and its behavioural norms rather than those of the wider society.

This understanding finds further confirmation in the context of 1 Cor. 4:1-5, where Paul's vocabulary so strongly resembles that found in 14:20-25. In 1 Cor. 4 Paul's expectation of a rejection of the dominant values of Graeco-Roman society is much more explicit, and it is clear that it is not shared by some in the church at Corinth. Whereas the imagery which Paul uses to describe his own sufferings all suggest someone

who is socially marginal and of low status,[27] his heavily sarcastic descriptions of the Corinthians in 4:8 uses vocabulary which would normally be applied to those who are socially exalted. From his perspective they are comfortable and at ease in a world in which he is an alien, but if they were truly spiritual, they would find that their experiences are more like his.[28] In fact, they should actively try to imitate him (4:16). It should be noted here that this is not a disagreement over the degree of transformation which Paul and some in Corinth expect to be experienced as the result of conversion. It is not that Paul expects them to have changed whereas they wish to remain the same. Rather, it is a dispute over the direction of such transformation. Paul's description in 4:8 of them as having become filled, and rich, and kings, stands in contrast to his description of the actual social status of the majority of the Corinthian church in 1:26. They regard their conversion as having resulted in a transformation which enables them to fulfil the dominant values of Graeco-Roman society in a way previously denied to most of them,[29] whereas Paul regards genuine conversion as involving a rejection of those values.

4.2.3 Summary

1 Cor. 14:20-25 gives us several important indications as to how Paul perceives Gentile conversion. Central to the picture provided is the issue of unrecognised sin. The outsider is turned into a convert by the revealing through prophecy of sins previously hidden from the self. This should not be taken to suggest that the individual concerned had done things without knowing it, but rather that certain actions, attitudes etc. had never previously been assessed as sinful. Conversion results from a sudden

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[27]Of course, Paul's 'natural' social status may have been somewhat higher than this (e.g. the claims of Luke that he was a Roman citizen - Acts 22:25ff.), but the point for him was surely that he had embraced a lowly lifestyle as a means of imitating Christ.

[28]See Barrett (1971b), pp.110-11 and Fee (1987), p.181: "In contrast to the Corinthians, who are 'filled, rich, ruling, wise, powerful, honoured,' he and his fellow apostles look far more like their Lord." Clarke (1993), pp.123-24; Horrell (1996), pp.200-04; Witherington (1995), pp.142-44 all discuss this verse in terms of a contrast between the understanding of leadership espoused by Paul and that current in Graeco-Roman society.

[29]Barclay (1992), p.57: "The ironic rebuke (4:8) is directed at the whole church and may reflect a consciousness among the Corinthians that, whatever their social origins, their status had been enhanced by their adoption of Christianity."

sensitizing of the conscience, and is thus, in the first instance, a move from a state of contentment to a state of crisis. Yet this impact of prophecy on a previously untroubled mind not only brings a crisis for the individual, but also resolves it. By in some sense bringing forward the process of divine judgement on an individual's life it results not in condemnation, but in the possibility of a new life. This new life is certainly not entirely about the inward concerns of the individual. For Paul issues of individual conscience are closely connected to the process of the Gentiles coming into the people of God, and this communal dimension of conversion involves a transformation of social attitudes. Paul's picture of conversion suggests not a transformation enabling the fulfilment of the dominant values of Graeco-Roman society to a previously unimaginable degree but, instead, a change in the opposite direction which involves the rejection of those values. This inevitably has consequences for practical consciousness, both in terms of the reflexive assessment of specific behaviour, and the framework against which such reflexive assessments are made, which is now that of the believing community.

4.3 Transforming Identity - 1 Cor. 6:9-11

If in 14:20-25 the issue of unrecognised sin is placed in the foreground by the exposing of the secrets of the heart, and the social and communal aspects of conversion are implicit, then in 6:9-11 this profile is reversed. Here it is social and communal isssues that are in the foreground, and the issue of unrecognised sin is implicit. By the use of a vice list in 6:9-10 Paul bluntly characterises the past lives of his Gentile converts as thoroughly polluted by sin, and contrasts this past with what happened to them at their conversion. It is through analysis of the sins listed that the issue of unrecognised sin once again emerges. Yet before these themes can be explored, it is necessary to establish that these verses are acceptable as evidence for Paul's understanding of conversion. Although 1 Cor. 6:9-11 has been a prominent text in recent study of Paul's theology, its importance has largely been a negative one, these verses being held to embody elements in Paul's thought that are of minor or marginal

significance. This allegation has been made principally, although not exclusively, in relation to Paul's use in 6:11 of δικαιόω, the verbal form of the righteousness terminology which is one of Paul's most frequent means of denoting conversion.[30] The debate concerning its use here is therefore relevant to Paul's understanding of conversion in general and, as we shall see, not unconnected to the themes we have brought forward from our examination of 1 Cor. 14:20-25.

4.3.1 1 Cor. 6:9-11 in Recent Scholarship

Most find here a perfect example of subsidiary themes. Paul may mean what he says, but what he says is not of 'real' importance to him, and thus he is effectively distanced from his own words. As in so much else, it was Bultmann who set the trend. Focusing on Paul's use of the verb δικαιόω in 6:11, he argued in his *Theology of the New Testament* that there it reflects an understanding of Jesus' death as an expiatory sacrifice for sin.[31] The verb "is not meant in the specific sense of Paul's doctrine of justification, but, corresponding to 'made holy' is meant in the general Christian sense: cancellation of sin".[32] The specific sense of Paul's doctrine is forensic-eschatological,[33] by which Bultmann means to set justification in an existential context, somewhat distanced from the idea of sacrificial atonement for concrete individual sins. By placing his references to 1 Cor. 6:9-11 within the chapter entitled 'On the Kerygma of the Hellenistic Church Aside from Paul', Bultmann clearly implies that these verses reflect pre-Pauline ideas about justification and the death of Jesus. Here Paul merely repeats what he has inherited, but elsewhere he develops his own thoughts.

Despite the fact that he is attacking Bultmann's interpretation of Paul's theology, E.P. Sanders assigns a rather similar role to 1 Cor. 6:9-11. Here the verb δικαιόω, which Sanders takes to denote the transfer to being a Christian, marks that

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[30]See above, p.54 n.2.
[31]Bultmann (ET 1952), p.72f., 84f.
[32]Bultmann (ET 1952), p.136.
[33]Bultmann (ET 1952), p.270f.

transfer by indicating that "the Christians were *cleansed* of the sins just enumerated."[34] Yet this is the least common of two distinguishable uses of the passive verb. Here Paul speaks of being righteoused from concrete sins, but elsewhere he more commonly speaks of being righteoused from the power of sin. The former use, represented by 1 Cor. 6:9-11, reflects a 'forensic' way of thinking about the transfer, the latter a participationist one, which means "to be *changed*, to be *transferred* from one realm to another: from sin to obedience, from death to life, from being under the law to being under grace."[35] Sanders asserts that it is this latter use which is more important to Paul, and one of his reasons for holding this is that some of the main judicial passages, including 1 Cor. 6:9-11, contain pre-Pauline formulae whereas "Paul's own terms tell us better how his mind worked."[36]

As with Bultmann, 1 Cor. 6:9-11 is regarded as an example of a subsidiary theme in Paul's understanding of justification, which is to be understood in contrast to a principal one. Admittedly, Sanders labels 1 Cor. 6:9-11 'forensic' whereas Bultmann does not, but the difference does not amount to anything more than a label.[37] 1 Cor. 6:9-11 fulfils an identical function in both their interpretations of Paul's theology. If there is a difference between the way these verses function for them, it is that Sanders places far greater weight specifically on 1 Cor. 6:9-11. For him it is *the* example of Paul's subsidiary 'forensic' use of δικαιόω, and thus attains something of the status of a proof

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[34]Sanders (1977), p.471. His italics.
[35]Sanders (1991), p.47.
[36]Sanders (1991), p.75.
[37]This labelling is potentially confusing, but at its root lie different definitions of 'forensic'. See Sanders (1977), p.492 n.57. Sanders does not accept that Paul ever speaks of justification in an imputed way, however defined, but (1991), p.101, speaks of Paul's expectation that through participating in Christ his converts would maintain moral perfection. For Sanders, 'forensic' means the acquittal/forgiveness of past transgressions, and as such it implies an understanding of Jesus' death as an atoning sacrifice for sin. Thus, that which Sanders labels 'forensic' is that which Bultmann would label 'non-forensic'! Sanders (1977), p.465: "I agree completely with Bultmann and most other scholars that what is distinctive in Paul is not the repetition of the traditional sacrificial view." The disagreement between them therefore concerns (i) how to label the subsidiary theme, and (ii) both the content and labelling of the principal theme with which the subsidiary one is contrasted. On (ii) there is a clear divergence between a forensic-eschatological understanding of justification (Bultmann) and a participatory one (Sanders). Sanders' definition of forensic justification is somewhat confusing given that in 6:11 he believes δικαιόω to denote cleansing, which is scarcely the imagery of the court room. In order to avoid confusion I employ inverted commas when using the term forensic in accordance with Sanders' definition. See above, p.42 n.7.

text, being quoted in full twice, and cited a further eight times in the second part of *Paul and Palestinian Judaism*.[38] Sanders writes:

> Although the dominant conception is the change of lordships, Paul frequently writes of the transfer as being cleansed of past *transgressions* in a way that does not call to mind the 'participationist' view of dying *with* Christ to the power of sin (but of Christ dying *for* transgressions). The clearest single passage is 1 Cor. 6:9-11, where Christians are said to have been washed, justified and sanctified of the blatant Gentile transgressions (idolatry and sexual immorality head the list).[39]

Although strictly speaking Sanders is discussing what is central and peripheral to Paul's transfer terminology rather than to his theology as a whole,[40] there is no doubt where the former leads in terms of the latter. Righteousness by faith is "not any one doctrine",[41] and there can "be no doubt as to where the heart of Paul's theology lies. He is not primarily concerned with the juristic categories, although he works with them. The real bite of his theology lies in the participatory categories, *even though he himself did not distinguish them this way*."[42] In contrast, J.L. Martyn insists that Paul did have a 'doctrine of rectification'[43] and that it was far from marginal to the core of Paul's gospel.[44] Paul did indeed inherit a Jewish-Christian tradition of rectification, and his use of it at 1 Cor. 6:11 is selected by Martyn for particular attention. The formula found here is fundamentally similar to passages from the Qumran texts,[45] and together they equate "rectification with God's forgiving initiative in cleansing one from sins."[46] Paul does not reject this meaning or launch a polemic against it, but he does elsewhere go well beyond

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[38]For quotations see Sanders (1977), pp.451,471. For references see pp.452, 463, 468, 498, 500, 501, 503, 545.
[39]Sanders (1977), p.498. His italics.
[40]Sanders (1983), p.10.
[41]Sanders (1977), p.492.
[42]Sanders (1977), p.502. His italics.
[43]Employing the noun 'rectification' and the verb 'to rectify' is Martyn's method of overcoming the perennial problem that although the verb δικαιόω and the noun δικαιοσύνη are cognate terms in Greek, the English terms by which they have traditionally been translated ('to justify' and 'righteousness') are not. See Martyn (1997b), pp.249-50.
[44]See Martyn (1997a), pp.154-56.
[45]E.g. 1QS 11:13-15, 1QH 4:34-37, 1QS 11:12.
[46]Martyn (1997a), p.145.

it (specifically Gal. 3:6-4:7), introducing anti-God powers against whose control of the cosmos Christ's death is a decisive assault. Thus, "the need of human beings is not so much forgiveness of their sins as deliverance from the malignant powers that hold them in bondage."[47] By introducing these modifications, Paul has constructed a new definition of rectification, which contains the old one within it.[48] It remains a single doctrine, but one in which what Sanders would term 'participatory categories' are dominant, and forensic categories are seen as primarily belonging to Paul's opponents. Building on the work of Käsemann, Martyn insists that rectification is central to Paul's concerns, but then defines rectification in a way that is thoroughly participatory.[49] Once again, 1 Cor. 6:9-11 is the typical representative of that which is subsidiary within Paul's thought.[50]

Thus, the arguments presented by Bultmann, Sanders and Martyn all reach towards the same conclusion: material which Paul has inherited from tradition does not reflect his own 'real' or central concerns, and in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 that inherited material has to do with concrete individual sins. One obvious objection to this approach is that, had he wished to, Paul could have said something different. If he repeated traditional material then he did so because he agreed with it. To be fair, all would accept that when Paul repeats traditional material he means what he says, only less so than when he is expressing his own ideas. The issue at stake is what is to be emphasised. Yet the fact that material is traditional does not of itself demonstrate that it is peripheral to Paul's central concerns. If one assumes that it does, then several difficulties arise. How does one identify with certainty that which is inherited tradition and that which is new? Even when

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[47]Martyn (1997a), p.153.

[48]Quoting de Boer (1989), p.185, Martyn speaks of the forensic apocalyptic theology of Paul's opponents circumscribed by a cosmological apocalyptic theology. See Martyn (1997a), pp.153-54. De Boer actually goes further, speaking of Paul having 'neutralized' this forensic apocalyptic theology.

[49]See Käsemann (ET 1971), pp.43-44. Sanders registers a protest against this. "It seems confusing to follow Käsemann's procedure of insisting that righteousness by faith is central but then to define it as a cosmic and corporate act." Sanders (1977), p.508.

[50]A rather different attempt to present 1 Cor. 6:9-11 as peripheral to Paul's real concerns is made by Scroggs (1983), pp.101-09 who, in an attempt to deflect Paul's condemnation of whatever aspect(s) of homosexual behaviour are implied by the terms μαλακοὶ and ἀρσενοκοῖται in 6:9, argues that Paul is simply borrowing the entire list from Hellenistic Jewish tradition. For discussion of the status of the items in the list, see below p.126 n.64.

one feels sure that particular material is traditional can one be sure that Paul has not adapted it, precisely so as to better reflect his own concerns? Even when Paul does not make changes, can we be sure that what he understands by a particular term or concept is identical to that which was understood by those using them previously?[51] Does the bringing of traditional elements into the context of his own thought alter the meaning of those elements? Without exercising great care one could all too easily end up with a reading of Paul which lacked all balance, elements uncongenial to the interpreter being labelled as tradition and pushed to the margins. Such complex questions mean that before 1 Cor. 6:9-11 can be examined as evidence for Paul's understanding of Gentile conversion, it is necessary to explore whether, and in what sense, the contents of these verses can properly be termed traditional.

4.3.2 Tradition in 1 Cor. 6:9-11

One can mean a great many things by tradition and, although the three scholars whose views we have discussed above all believe 1 Cor. 6:9-11 to be traditional, there are variations in what they mean by this. Bultmann speaks of 1 Cor. 6:9-11 in connection with "a stereotyped scheme of primitive Christian teaching"[52] which contrasts the present righteous state of Gentile Christians with their former sinful one. Yet there is no indication that he conceives of this scheme in terms of fixed formulas, or that what Bultmann considers the unusual sense of δικαιόω in 6:11 implies that the verse is a quotation from a formula. As we have already noted, Sanders does believe 6:9-11 to be at least partially formulaic and to refer to Christ's death for sins. The existence of a pre-Pauline formula containing a 'forensic' use of δικαιόω is important to Sanders since it provides support for the distinction between this inherited use of the verb and Paul's own

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[51]Thus, Dinkler (1992), p.149 comments on 1 Cor. 6:11, "Und auch wenn es sich hier - wie ich mit E. Lohse annehme - um ein liturgisches Zitat handelt, in dem ursprünglich dem Wort δικαιωθῆναι ein vorpaulinischer und zwar - wie Bultmann sagt - "genuin-christlicher Sinn der Sündentilgung" eignete, so hat doch Paulus das zitierte Verb in seinem eigenen Sinn verstanden und deshalb zitiert." Even if Dinkler is wrong in supposing that Paul is using a liturgical quotation, the methodological problem which he raises is a genuine one.

[52]Bultmann (ET 1952), pp.72-73. The German original (1953), p.73 speaks of 'ein Schema der urchristlichen Predigt'.

participatory one. There are formulaic instances of the former, but apparently not of the latter.[53] For Martyn, it is 6:11 alone which contains a Jewish-Christian formula, and its application to Gentiles "is a secondary move on Paul's part."[54] As if all this were not complicated enough, other exegetes regard the whole of 6:9-11 as part of a baptismal catechism,[55] or a more general baptismal tradition.[56]

If we are to assess the validity of these various claims then we need some means of defining and classifying tradition. E.E. Ellis argues that tradition must "mean more than a prior idea or story floating in the memory of the Apostle ...It is, more concretely, a specific item in a traditioning process that was formed and in oral or written usage before Paul incorporated it into his letter."[57] The presence of such items in a traditioning process are specifically indicated by the presence of such technical terms as παραδίδωμι (deliver) and παραλαμβάνω (receive).[58] A second rather less specific indicator of the presence of a traditioning process is "the employment of the same traditional pieces by several apostolic circles."[59] Here the content of the traditional pieces may be subject to greater variety, but the common features are sufficient to indicate both an agreed understanding and a previously existing context. In effect, Ellis thus proposes a 'stronger' and a 'weaker' form of the traditioning process.[60]

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[53] Sanders (1977), pp.502-03. In turn this distinction between two uses of δικαιόω bolsters the wider one between participatory categories with which Paul is primarily concerned and juristic ones with which he is not. Sanders is well aware that in general participatory categories may well be no more original to Paul than 'forensic' ones. Sanders (1977), p.453: "Whether such ideas were actually common in Christianity is hard to determine ...when he expresses them Paul does not consider himself as an innovator, but only to be reminding his readers of the implications of their own Christian experience."

[54] Martyn (1997a), p.142 n.4.

[55] Dinkler (1992), pp.149,153; Fuller (1986), pp.101-02. Meeks (1983), p.129 says of 1 Cor. 6:9-11 that Paul is here quoting a catechetical rule.

[56] Schrage (1991), pp.427-28.

[57] Ellis (1986), p.481. Ellis' methodology is affirmed by Eriksson (1998), pp.81-86. This monograph on traditions in 1 Corinthians does not include 1 Cor. 6:9-11 among the passages where Paul is held to have employed traditions.

[58] See 1 Cor. 11:2, 11:23, 15:3.

[59] Ellis (1986), p.482.

[60] Something similar had earlier been proposed by A.M. Hunter, who distinguishes between 'guarded tradition' and 'floating oral tradition.' He too places 1 Cor. 11:23f. and 15:3f. in the stronger of these two categories. See Hunter (1961), pp.22-23.

When one applies these categories to 1 Cor. 6:9-11 it is obvious that there is nothing which can qualify for Ellis' stronger form of the traditioning process. The necessary technical terms are absent. As regards the weaker form, the vice list of 6:9-10 clearly does qualify since the New Testament texts bear witness to the existence of such lists in the Pauline, Petrine, Johannine and Jacobean circles. Although "no term is common to all the lists",[61] and the variety in the vices condemned renders futile any attempt to construct a hypothetical 'original' list, the overlap between the lists is sufficient to suggest the existence of "an agreed understanding about moral imperatives for believers that was in some degree formulated and shared and, at the same time, subject to different applications and developments within the various early Christian missions."[62] The vice list of 6:9-10 is traditional in form, but it is not a verbatim quotation. As no two vice lists are identical or even nearly so, we have no identifiable instance of a list being quoted verbatim, and there are simply no grounds for asserting that Paul does so here.[63] He is responsible for the selection of those vices which he condemns.[64] We have no way of knowing how Paul would have assessed the seriousness of any individual vice in relation to that of the others listed, but "there is one ordering principle: vice is the opposite of virtue."[65]

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[61]Easton (1932), p.5.

[62]Ellis (1986), pp.483-84.

[63]Zoas (1988), p.623: "There is simply no evidence that Paul is merely repeating traditional material in these catalogues, even if the form is a traditional one." A comparison of 1 Cor. 6:9-10 with the vice list of Gal. 5:19-21 is instructive. They are often argued to closely resemble each other in form yet, of the twenty-five vices contained in the two lists, only three appear in both.

[64]Given this, the attempt by Scroggs (1983), pp.101-09, to suggest that Paul included ἀρσενοκοῖται and μαλακοί simply because they were traditional fails. The former only otherwise appears at 1 Tim. 1:10, and the latter nowhere else at all. It was for these reasons that Alfred Seeberg, the pioneer of the study of New Testament ethical lists, doubted that these two terms had been part of the original list, in the existence of which he erroneously believed. He regarded the inclusion of ἀρσενοκοῖται as a 'mere possibility' compared to that of other vices rated as 'certain' or 'probable', and he excluded μαλακοί entirely. See Seeberg (1903, ET 1995), pp.167-72.

[65]Meeks (1993), p.69. If further evidence is needed that Paul could fully 'own' such traditional material as vice lists one need look no further than 1 Cor. 5:9-11, where with reference to a previous letter he twice makes use of short lists, and Gal. 5:21, where he refers to a vice list as if it formed a regular part of his teaching. The phrase βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομήσουσιν, which appears in both contexts, is usually considered to be a pre-Pauline formula which already bracketed pre-Pauline vice lists. But as the only other instance of its being attached to a vice list is at Eph. 5:5, Paul may have been

Thus, all the available evidence suggests that in 6:9-10 Paul uses traditional forms and material, but that there is nothing here which could justifiably be termed a quotation or a formula. Instead Paul selects, adapts and inserts to suit his own purposes, fulfilling the role of an active participant in a traditioning process of the weaker sort. But what of 6:11, which contains all the material relating to the Corinthians' post-conversion state? Certainly none of the passages cited by Bultmann in support of the existence of a stereotyped scheme of 'then - now' teaching could remotely be described as bearing close verbal resemblance to 1 Cor. 6:9-11.[66] The only common feature is the existence of a contrast between pre- and post-conversion states. One suspects that Bultmann would be happy with such a conclusion, and would employ other grounds on which to argue that the use of δικαιόω in 6:11 reflects traditional ideas.[67] The point for our purposes is that there is nothing in the evidence produced by Bultmann which could support the claim of Martyn and Sanders that this verse is formulaic.[68] Martyn himself produces no other example of this particular Jewish-Christian rectification formula,[69] and the other such formulae in Paul to which he points, namely Rom. 3:25f. and Rom. 4:25, differ significantly from 1 Cor. 6:9-11 in that they both contain a specific reference to the death of Jesus.[70] Given this, and given that in 6:11 Paul is so clearly speaking about Gentiles, the assertion that 6:11 is either a fixed formula or specifically Jewish-Christian appears entirely arbitrary. Indeed, the portion of the verse which on a first reading seems suggestive of a formula is not that which refers to

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the first to combine the two. Ellis (1986), pp.484-85 rather fails to recognise this, placing considerable stress on the appearance of this traditional phrase in 1 Cor. 6:9.

[66]Col. 1:21f., 3:5f., Eph. 2:1f., 2:11f., Tit. 3:3f., 1 Pet. 1:4f., 2:25, 2 Clem. 1:6f.

[67]Principally the argument that the meaning of all three verbs in 6:11 is dominated by the idea of baptismal cleansing. See below, p.133 n.87.

[68]Sanders never specifies which elements of 1 Cor. 6:9-11 he regards as part of a formula although, given that his interest is in Paul's use of δικαιόω, one assumes that it includes 6:11.

[69]There are not even other cases of the three verbs of 6:11 standing in close association to one another. Commentators frequently cite 1 Cor. 1:30 where Paul applies a trio of terms to Christ, but these are nouns. One of them (ἀπολύτρωσις) is not a cognate of any of the verbs of 6:11 and the order is different, with δικαιοσύνη appearing first rather than third. One can speak of similar ideas or similar rhetorical structures, but scarcely of evidence of a formula. Even if one could, the test of employment in several apostolic circles would again be failed.

[70]Martyn (1997a), pp.142-43.

rectification, but the concluding phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ καὶ ἐν τῷ πνεύματι τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν. Could this intriguingly 'trinitarian' phrase be a baptismal formula?[71]

The words ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ receive widespread use in the New Testament, are applied to a wide range of activities, and were clearly not coined by Paul. However, we have no other example of its combination with Paul's words concerning the Holy Spirit. Despite this, Fuller suggests that the entire phrase must be pre-Pauline since "Paul himself would have written into (*eis*, 1 Cor. 1:13) the name."[72] It is true that all of Paul's other references to baptism suggest that he was familiar with its performance εἰς τὸ ὄνομα,[73] but most New Testament references to baptism do the same. Acts 2:38 (ἐπί) and Acts 10:48 (ἐν) provide the only exceptions.[74] One could just as easily argue that Paul wrote ἐν here because although 6:11 clearly evokes baptism through the presence of ἀπολούω the verb βαπτίζω does not appear,[75] and ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι follows the verb δικαιόω with which εἰς may have sounded inappropriate.[76] In other words, the context may not have provoked the use of an actual formula spoken at a baptism.

Our conclusion regarding tradition in 6:11 is therefore rather more sceptical than that regarding 6:9-10. Only the words ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ are clearly not original to Paul. One cannot even speak of a traditioning process of the weaker sort. Taken as a whole, 1 Cor. 6:9-11 does display

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[71]For a positive answer to this question see Godet (ET 1886), pp.300-01 and Goudge (1903), p.46.
[72]Fuller (1986), p.102.
[73]Rom. 6:3; 1 Cor. 1:10,13,15; 1 Cor. 10:2; 1 Cor. 12:13, Gal. 3:27.
[74]The New Testament speaks of only two other activities εἰς τό ὄνομα - praying (Mt. 18:20) and believing (Jn. 3:18, 1 Jn. 5:13), Paul of none.
[75]Gal. 3:27-28 supports this point. Here Paul uses εἰς in conjunction with βαπτίζω, but the phrase εἷς ἐστε ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ when describing its consequences. Compare 1 Cor. 12:13, εἰς ἕν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν.
[76]That εἰς was particularly associated with the verb βαπτίζω is also indicated by Paul's use of it even when the baptism in question is not into Christ. At 1 Cor. 10:2 he says that the Israelites εἰς τὸν Μωϋσῆν ἐβαπτίσαντο.

traditional elements - the words just referred to, those concerning the inheritance of the kingdom, and a vice list - but without any indication that anyone before Paul had ever combined them as he does, even approximately. They contain no baptismal catechism, or fixed baptismal tradition, or Jewish-Christian rectification formula. To speak of these verses as formulaic is entirely without foundation, although it remains possible, as it does with any text, that Paul here uses prior ideas. It is clear that the supposedly traditional nature of these verses cannot be used to support the idea that in 6:11 Paul uses δικαιόω in a manner different from usual, or that any of the contents of 6:9-11 should be taken as peripheral to his 'real' concerns. Of course, neither does this prove the opposite in either case, but it does mean that the issues must be debated in relation to the contents of Paul's text not its imagined previous history.

4.3.3 Reconstructing Moral Identity

One of the principal features of these contents is the contrast Paul draws between who the Corinthians were before their conversion, and their current identity. The vice-list of 6:9-10 is not, strictly speaking, a catalogue of sins, but of types of sinner. Paul speaks not of those who commit sexual immorality, but of the sexually immoral and so on.[77] To describe the Corinthians' conversion simply as having dealt with the guilt of past transgressions therefore fails to do justice to Paul's language. Because the Corinthians were washed, sanctified and justified they are no longer who they were, but have a new identity. Even though Paul criticises their current conduct (6:1-8), he expresses this in terms of what they have done rather than who they are. Their unrighteous behaviour (ἀδικέω, 6:8) does not of itself place them among the unrighteous (οἱ ἄδικοι, 6:9). Although he thinks that their new identity ought to find expression in their behaviour, its failure always to do so does not lead Paul to declare that new identity void. Indeed, his declaration of their new identity in 6:11, heralded by the phrase καὶ ταῦτά τινες ἦτε ἀλλὰ, is the climax of Paul's argument and not its

[77]Contrast Gal. 5:19-21.

starting point. Behaviour and identity are connected but separate and, although a contrast between types of behaviour is very strongly implied, the fundamental contrast in 6:9-11 is between types of people.[78]

For this reason, the tendency of commentators to discuss how far the Corinthians may once actually have been guilty of the sins included in the vice list entirely misses the point.[79] The words ταῦτά τινες ἦτε do serve to establish a link between the list and the past lives of the Corinthians, but they cannot be read over-precisely. On the one hand, Paul includes idolaters in the list, and it is hard to imagine any Gentile not having been such. One also wonders whether many Gentile males would have escaped falling into at least one of the categories of sexual sin which Paul names.[80] Yet on the other, when Paul includes a term like ἅρπαγες, which seems to imply robbery with violence,[81] one doubts that he necessarily means that some of the Corinthians formerly lurked in the city's back alleys waiting to mug passers-by. One also wonders how many of the Corinthians really were thieves or greedy or drunkards or slanderers. The point is an important one because the sins one doubts that the Corinthians had actually committed are ones of which any individual, Christian or not, might be unhappy to be accused. Yet the sins which one feels all Gentiles or very large

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[78]See Winninge (1995) for a thesis which, although not discussing this passage in any detail, discerns a strong contrast between the act 'to sin' and the status 'sinner'. Thus, although Paul implies that continuing to behave as they have been will endanger the Corinthians' salvation, the basic flow of his argument is not that one is numbered among the saints on account of good conduct, but rather that one ought to behave well because one is a saint.

[79]Further, τινες is ambiguous enough to allow wildly different estimates of the Corinthians' pre-conversion moral state. Barrett (1971b), p.141: "Not all the Corinthians had been fornicators, not all thieves, and so on, but in the Corinthian congregation a good assortment of such immoral and criminal persons was to be found." Compare Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.119: "Not all of them, not even many, but only some, are said to have been guilty; and it is all a thing of the past." See also Godet (ET 1886), p.297 and Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.107.

[80]Clark (1989), pp.22-23: "It was taken for granted that men (married or not) would make use of mistresses, or of slaves and prostitutes of either sex ...For married and marriageable women the rule was always the same: observe chastity, control sexual desire, and ignore your husband's extra-marital activities unless he actually brings a mistress into the house." See also Pomeroy (1975), pp.159-60. Of course, the majority of male members of the Corinthian church may not have been wealthy enough to own slaves or have frequent recourse to prostitutes, but the ethical standards shaping behaviour are not Jewish or Christian ones. Exceptions to this might perhaps have been those Gentile converts who had already been interested in or attached to the synagogue.

[81]See Héring (ET 1962), pp.41-42.

numbers of them must have committed are ones which they would not have recognised as sins prior to their conversion. What Gentile regarded Graeco-Roman religion as 'idolatrous'? Which Gentile male regarded all sexual relations outside of marriage as inherently wrong?[82] Paul clearly believes that the Corinthians' conversion should have redefined their morality.

It is therefore significant that Paul begins the vice list with what are, viewed from a Jewish perspective, characteristically Gentile sins (πορνεία, εἰδωλολατρεία). Mention of that of which the Corinthians really were guilty secures acceptance of the appropriateness of the remainder of the list. Labels which might then have been rejected as unjust, are now to be embraced as representing a true evaluation of the Corinthians' past. Paul is therefore not providing the Corinthians with a description of their pre-conversion lives which they would have recognised as such at that time. He is not suggesting that prior to their conversion they knew themselves as guilty sinners in search of a forgiving God.[83] Rather he is inviting them to reproduce an already familiar piece of biographical reconstruction which retrospectively defines their past lives as loci of sin. Conversion has changed who they are, transferring them from one category of person (οἱ ἄδικοι) to another (οἱ ἅγιοι), and it is this event which now defines acceptable behaviour.

In doing so, conversion redraws the boundaries of such acceptable behaviour. Idolatry and the sexual sins listed are now defined as belonging to the same sphere as other types of behaviour which the Corinthians, as members of Graeco-Roman society, would already have considered undesirable. The boundaries of immorality have been stretched in order to include items which would previously not have belonged there, and it is this boundary stretching function which 6:9-11 performs in relation to Paul's

[82]This is not to suggest that Graeco-Roman society lacked well-defined boundaries in relation to sexual conduct, but simply that such boundaries were drawn in different places than by Paul.
[83]Although we will never know whether the Corinthians could have been termed 'religious seekers' in a broader sense, it does seem that in relation to sin/s they moved from solution to plight.

condemnation of church members having quarrels which issued in court cases. At least some in the Corinthian church saw nothing objectionable in such behaviour, to which Paul bluntly says ἀλλὰ ὑμεῖς ἀδικεῖτε καὶ ἀποστερεῖτε (6:8). The repeated ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε (6:2,3,9) expresses exasperation at the Corinthians' failure to recognise what should have been obvious to the saints who, it seems, are even now insufficiently sensitised to sin for them to recognise it in their midst. He categorises their conduct differently from the way in which they would do so themselves, and uses 6:9-11 to emphasise what he considers to be its true nature.[84] The Corinthians are invited to identify the behaviour of some of their number in wronging one another as belonging in the same category as the vices listed in 6:9-10.[85] Just as Paul expects their conversion to have redefined previously acceptable religious and sexual practices as unrighteous and sinful, so he now expects his argument to produce a similar redefinition with regard to their litigious quarrels. If they accept his position then such disputes will come to seem morally anomalous, stray pieces of behaviour from another world, namely their own past.

The impact of conversion upon practical consciousness is therefore thrown into sharp relief. Barriers are erected between the converts' present and their past. The exposure of unrecognised sin means that conduct such as the worship of the gods, which would formerly have met with instinctive approval, ought now to strike the

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[84]I thus regard 6:9-11 as well integrated into the argument of 6:1-11 as a whole, something which has not always been acknowledged. See Zoas (1988), p.623 and Richardson, P. (1983), p.42 for support for my position, although one doubts that Richardson is correct when he uses this as a platform from which to argue that chapters 5 and 6 are so closely integrated that the court cases of 6:1-11 must concern sexual matters.

[85]This connection is supported by Paul's use of eschatological motifs in both 6:1-8 and 6:9-11. His main objection, indeed the only explicitly stated one, to going to court before the unrighteous is that the saints will judge the world (6:2-4), and the consequence of the behaviour of the unrighteous, condemned by the vice list, will be a failure to inherit the kingdom. Thus, present conduct is to be determined by eschatological roles. This point has been rather neglected in recent scholarship in favour of (i) concern over the formulaic/traditional nature of the phrase 'inheriting the kingdom', and (ii) concern to establish whether the Corinthian courts were corrupt and/or whether Paul was concerned as to the impact of court cases on the public reputation of the church. See above p.126 n.65 on (i), and Winter (1991) for an example of (ii). None of these concerns are illegitimate in themselves, but they add up to a concentration on the splinters of Paul's argument instead of the planks.

individual as a glaring lapse in behavioural competence.[86] Further, these changes are not isolated pieces of moral reassessment but function as part of a wholesale reconstruction of moral identity. The recognition of former religious practices as idolatry and former sexual practices as immoral creates a moral divide in areas fundamental to the functioning of Graeco-Roman society. While Paul elsewhere displays a desire to sustain relationships across this divide (e.g. 1 Cor. 7:12-14, 10:27-30), the focus of 6:9-11 is upon its creation. As we saw in relation to calling (**3.4.2**), conversion means that the fundamental boundary of the social world is the believing community. Outsiders not only behave differently but belong to a different place, Paul's repeated mention of the kingdom of God (6:9-10) implying two mutually exclusive realms. The Gentile convert comes to thinks of friends and neighbours with whom he or she formerly identified as essentially other. The context within which practical consciousness is constructed is now that of the believing community.

4.3.4 Effecting the Transformation

In 6:11, Paul describes how it was that the Corinthians experienced a reconstruction of their moral identity, employing three different verbs to denote conversion. They are ἀπολούω, ἁγιάζω and δικαιόω. One might have thought that the decision to describe conversion using these three terms suggests a striving, conscious or instinctive, for conceptual richness. Paul senses that no single verb will suffice to describe the transformation of his converts' identity. Despite this, Sanders and Bultmann both argue in a way which makes the second and third verbs no more than repetitions of the first.[87] About to quote 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Sanders writes that "in their present life the Christians have been *sanctified* in the sense of *cleansed.*"[88] On the next page Sanders

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[86]Meeks (1983), pp.128-29 rightly emphasises that 1 Cor. 5&6 are organized around a concern to define the present boundaries of the community, but rather overlooks Paul's strong concern with conversion and the consequent establishment of sharp boundaries between the believers' present and their past. As well as 6:9-11, see 5:6-8 and 6:20.

[87]Bultmann (ET 1952), p.136: "All three verbs describe the sacramental bath of purification." Sanders (1977), p.471: "The point of all the verbs here, including 'justified', is that the Christians were *cleansed* of the sins just enumerated."

[88]Sanders (1977), pp.450-51. His italics.

speaks of "a soteriology of cleansing, awaiting the coming salvation in a pure state."[89] When one adds to this 'justification' solely in the sense of 'the forgiveness of sins', it is difficult to see any objection to writing: 'In their present life Christians have been *justified* in the sense of *cleansed*.' The three verbs ἀπολούω, ἁγιάζω and δικαιόω have become synonyms.

This is not what is suggested by the order of Paul's argument. Paul does *not* remind the Corinthians that they were purified (washed, sanctified and justified), that this signifies the forgiveness of their sins, and that therefore they should "remain *pure and blameless* until the Day of the Lord,"[90] desisting from such sins as their litigious quarrels. Doubtless they should, and doubtless it is a proper inference from what Paul says, but in fact the order in which he puts things is rather different. First Paul criticises their current conduct in defrauding one another and taking one another to court, and then he tells them who they were, before telling them that by virtue of their having been washed, sanctified and justified that is no longer who they are. Instead of initiating the argument their conversion clinches it, making their sin not only wrong in the eyes of God, but also a self inflicted ἥττημα (6:7) upon themselves in their status as saints. Again we find confirmation that Paul's primary concern is with the Corinthians' identity, with who they now are. His anxiety reflects not simply the possibility of fresh sins requiring forgiveness, but the fact that in his view their conversion ought to have alienated them from sin. A description of conversion which has several dimensions fits the structure of Paul's argument.

The grammar of 6:11 also indicates that the three verbs are not synonyms. There is a triple ἀλλά, making each verb stand individually, as well as collectively, in opposition to what has gone before.[91] Godet insists that the correct

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[89]Sanders (1977), p.452.
[90]Sanders (1977), p.451.
[91]Modern English translations (RSV, NRSV, NIV, GNB, REB) obscure this by only translating the first of the three, whereas the AV had given them all.

translation here is 'but, moreover',[92] and this is certainly the way in which it was read by Chrysostom.[93] ἐδικαιώθητε thus becomes a rhetorical climax, something also indicated by its neat opposition to the mention of οἱ ἄδικοι in 6:1 and 6:9.[94] Far from being a mere repetition of the previous two verbs, ἐδικαιώθητε is prepared for by them. To say this is not to commit the opposite error and so segregate the meaning of the verbs that they come to seem like chronological stages in a process. Paul does not mean that the Corinthians were first washed, then sanctified and finally justified. The very opposition with the unrighteous of 6:1 and 6:9, which places particular emphasis on justification, is itself probably the reason for the order of the three verbs.[95] The commentators on the right track are those who take the verbs as denoting different aspects of the same event of conversion.[96] Each verb demands examination in its own right.

There is no disagreement as to the meaning of ἀπολούω, which implies exactly what Bultmannn and Sanders say that it does, namely that through baptism the Corinthians have been cleansed of their past transgressions. The only other

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[92]Godet (ET 1886), p.299. He draws attention to 2 Cor. 7:11 as another text where ἀλλά bears this sense.

[93]Chrysostom (ET 1839), p.218: "Was this then all? Nay: but He hath also sanctified. Nor even is this all: He hath also justified. (᾽Αρ᾽ οὖν τοῦτο μόνον; Οὐδαμῶς, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἡγίασεν· ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ τοῦτο μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐδικαίωσε)" See also Fee (1987), p.246 n.34.

[94]Fuller (1986), pp.98,101 argues that in 6:1 οἱ ἄδικοι are simply outsiders, with no implication of immoral conduct. Winter (1991), p.90 suggests the opposite, i.e., that in 6:1 Paul is not concerned by the fact that the judges are outsiders but by their moral character. One doubts such distinctions of meaning are sustainable since Paul's definition(s) of morality are sufficiently different from those of Graeco-Roman society for outsiders to be immoral in his eyes without their having violated their own moral codes. To be an outsider and to be immoral thus amount to more or less the same thing. See Meeks (1993), p.69. Note also that οἱ ἄδικοι do not appear in Gal. 5:19-21 where it is those who do the works of the flesh who will not inherit the Kingdom. Their appearance in 1 Cor. 6:9 therefore cannot be attributed to tradition, i.e., the opposition between οἱ ἄδικοι and ἐδικαιώθητε does not appear accidental.

[95]See 1 Cor. 1:30 where righteousness comes first in a similar sequence, on which see above, p.127 n.69.

[96]Fung (1980), p.251: "Thus we find presented here in juxtaposition cleansing, sanctification and justification as different aspects of a single act of grace at the outset of Christian life, as coincident facets of the believers' one experience of union with Christ." Fung argues that justification in 6:11 is forensic, and even although what he means by 'forensic' seems closer to Bultmann than to Sanders, his final reference to 'union with Christ' is nonetheless strikingly participatory in tone. See also Robertson & Plummer (1911), pp.119-20 and Fee (1987), p.246.

use of the verb in the New Testament is at Acts 22:16, where Ananias instructs the newly converted Paul to ἀναστὰς βάπτισαι καὶ ἀπόλουσαι τὰς ἁμαρτίας σου, ἐπικαλεσάμενος τὸ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ.[97] The connection of washing with baptism, its purpose in dealing with past transgressions, and the mention of the name of Christ all suggest that at 1 Cor. 6:9-11 the use of ἀπολούω as part of a description of conversion can be nothing other than a strong and clear reference to baptism.[98] Difficulties arise only when this idea of baptismal cleansing is allowed to dominate the context completely. If I am right that there is little evidence for the presence of a baptismal formula in 6:11b, and right that the three verbs of 6:11 are not synonyms, then this is a mistaken interpretation. Had Paul wished to make baptismal cleansing his primary emphasis, then he could have spoken of baptism directly. As it is, his clear reference to it through the use of ἀπολούω means that it appears as one of three ways of describing conversion.

The meaning of ἁγιάζω is therefore not reducible solely to the idea of cleansing and resultant moral purity. As elsewhere, it also denotes something about the community as the sphere of purity (see **3.3.4**). "God's people should be sanctified because God's presence dwells with them."[99] This can be seen particularly clearly in 1 Corinthians. At 1:2 the church is defined as ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, and at 7:14, sanctification becomes an explicitly participatory concept, the unbelieving spouse of a Christian being sanctified by virtue of their union

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[97]As here, ἀπολούω appears at 1 Cor. 6:11 in the middle voice, although there, as he does with the following two verbs, we might have expected Paul to use the aorist passive form. However, see Porter (1992), p.67: "Grammarians are undecided exactly how to characterise the Greek middle voice, but most are agreed that a reflexive middle sense ('he washed himself') ...is not the predominant one in the Hellenistic period." Paul does mean 'you were washed' not 'you washed yourselves'. See also Barrett (1971b), p.141; Fee (1987), p.245 n.31

[98]*Contra* Fee (1987), pp.246-47, who is concerned to accord as little significance as possible to baptism in the interpretation of these verses. Fee writes that although an indirect baptismal allusion is possible, "Paul is not here concerned with the Christian initiatory rite, but with the spiritual transformation made possible through Christ and effected by the Spirit." This seems to me an anachronistic holding apart of things which Paul, and early Christians in general, would have understood as belonging together.

[99]Thielman (1994), p.99.

with a believer.[100] If in 6:9-11 Paul does speak of a transformation of identity, and criticises the current conduct of the Corinthians on the basis that it is incompatible with who they now are, then it is likely that he intends the sanctification received at conversion to be understood in terms of divine appropriation. In 6:11 ἡγιάσθητε means "You were claimed by God as his own and made a member of his holy people - in Paul's language a saint (ἅγιος)."[101] This appropriation certainly has strong ethical consequences, but it primarily denotes a change of status and identity.

When one comes to δικαιόω it is clear that, in the general sense of a legal metaphor, the term is used forensically. To point out the obvious, 6:9-11 concludes Paul's criticism of the quarrels that have resulted in members of the church taking one another to court, and so a legal metaphor is particularly appropriate to the context. Further, much of the legal imagery in the preceeding verses has an eschatological orientation. Paul bases his objections to going to law before the unrighteous on the belief that the saints will judge (κρίνω) the world (6:2). The idea of inheritance could also be termed a legal concept, and Paul stresses that the unrighteous will not inherit (κληρονομέω) the kingdom (6:9,10). Viewed in eschatological terms, the contrast which Paul makes between two types of people is between those who will do the judging, and those who will be amongst the judged. The statement that the Corinthians were justified at their conversion therefore most naturally reads as an assertion that the Corinthians were acquitted in God's court, and as a result enjoy right standing before

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[100]Clearly this use of ἁγιάζω is exceptional in so far as purity and actual moral conduct are sharply separated. Sanctification here neither produces moral behaviour, nor demands it as a condition of its continuance. Yet this observation only serves to highlight the difficulties of categorizing Paul's thought. One speaks of 1 Cor. 7:14 as 'participatory', but might not the sanctification described here also be termed 'imputed'?

[101]Barrett (1971b), p.142. See also Héring (ET 1962), p.42. The eschatological nature of the other legal imagery in the context means that the label which Bultmann refuses to apply to δικαιόω in 6:11, namely 'forensic-eschatological', might actually be thought a particularly appropriate way to describe this usage!

God.[102] Along with their cleansing and their appropriation by God, it is this which qualifies them for their own eschatological roles as judges.

Thus, Paul speaks of conversion in terms of the cleansing of transgressions, of divine appropriation into God's people, and of the acquittal by God which produces right standing before him. The three verbs of 6:11 are distinct and, *contra* Bultmann and Sanders, their context indicates that the verbs ἁγιάζω and δικαιόω are not simply alternative means by which to express the idea of cleansing. Paul's description of conversion is not one-dimensional. Yet neither does this mean that these three concepts are divorced from one another. Paul uses them to provide a three-dimensional description of a single event and, as different dimensions of one event, they too form part of the context against which each other is to be read. The three are certainly not identical but they are interdependent, each expressing an aspect of the transformation of identity experienced by the Corinthians at conversion.

By collapsing all three verbs into one, Sanders and Bultmann eliminate both their distinctiveness and their interdependence. The problems arising from this are well illustrated by Sanders' categorisation of the concept of justification in 6:11, which is somewhat confusing. Sanders argues both that justification is here intended in the sense of cleansing and that, as such, this usage is 'forensic'. Yet as we have already commented, cleansing is not a legal image.[103] The label 'forensic' seems to have become a useful catch-all term which Sanders can use to denote any use of righteousness terminology which he does not consider participatory. This confusion is a vital one since, in asserting that Paul's use of justification in 6:11 is forensic in the sense that it is a legal image used to denote the gift of right standing before God, I am not using the term in opposition to the idea of participation. The interdependence of the three verbs in 6:11 forbids this, for the legal image of justification operates in relation to that of washing and

[102]See Barrett (1971b), p.142; Fee (1987), p.247 n.37.
[103]See above, p.121 n.37.

that of sanctification, all three together expressing the transformation of identity experienced by the Corinthians. That they were justified is only one of the bases of who they now are. Thus, Dinkler takes 6:9-11 as an example of the indicative and imperative in Paul's thought, and summarises their teaching with the words "Werdet heilig - denn ihr seid heilig!"[104] In similar fashion Fee writes, "but that is what some of you were. Now in Christ Jesus you are something different, so live like it. Stop defrauding, living in sexual sin etc., because you are no longer among those who do."[105]

This does not lead Paul to employ explicitly participatory terms in 6:9-11, but if sin is a contradiction of who the Corinthians are then Paul clearly expects them to be free from the power of sin, the plight to which Sanders understands participation in Christ to be the answer. Paul uses legal imagery in abundance here, but the context in which he does so means that its sense does not remain exclusively forensic. The forensic imagery itself helps to express a fundamental change from one category of person to another, and it is this change of identity which empowers a change in behaviour and implies participation in Christ. Astonishingly, and in complete contradiction to his later arguments which I have already reported, this conclusion finds support from the younger Bultmann. In his classic essay on the indicative and the imperative in Paul he writes "Next to statements according to which the justified person is free from sin ...are those statements which admonish the justified person to fight against sin (main references: Rom. 6:1-7; 8:1-17; Gal. 5:13-25; **1 Cor. 6:9-11**)."[106] Bultmann makes it very clear that this involves more than simply the forgiveness of sins. For Paul, sinlessness is "freedom from the power of sin,"[107] and "because the Christian is free from sin through

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[104]Dinkler (1992), p.149.
[105]Fee (1987), p.245. See also Lietzmann (1969), p.27 n.7 and Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.107.
[106]Bultmann (1924, ET 1995), p.195. My emphasis. This dramatic change seems to have been the result of the impact of existentialism upon Bultmann's theology. In 1924 he was happy to discuss justification in terms of mysticism, citing Reitzenstein's views on the subject. Yet in *Theology of the New Testament*, without acknowledging any change in his position, Bultmann explicitly criticises Reitzenstein and denies a mystical element in precisely those passages where he had discerned it in 1924. Compare Bultmann (1924, ET 1995), p.210 and (ET 1952), p.278. Note the mention of 1 Cor. 6:11 in both cases.
[107]Bultmann (1924, ET 1995), p.198.

justification, he is now to fight against sin."[108] Indeed, such freedom from the power of sin stems from the forensic character of justification: "It can in no way be that justification concerns only the remission of sins committed prior to baptism, not having significance for the life of the justified following baptism. In that case its eschatological character - that justification is the ἔσχατον (last thing), the definitive event - would be misunderstood."[109] As Käsemann was later to argue, justification in 1 Cor. 6:11 is "the reality of the transformed existence conveyed in the baptismal event."[110] At their conversion the Corinthians were not simply cleansed in order to await the *eschaton* in purity with their sins forgiven. They are not simply people who no longer commit the sins of idolatry etc. Instead, their existence has been transformed so that they are no longer idolaters etc. There has been a change of person as well as behaviour; who they are has changed as well as what they do.

Thus, 1 Cor. 6:9-11 appears as a passage which, by means of the indicative and imperative,[111] proclaims freedom from the power of sin, and implies participation in Christ. Justification in 6:11 is primarily forensic but, given its context, this forensic justification itself hints heavily at participation. Further evidence of this is

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[108]ibid.

[109]ibid. Weiss (1910), p.154, even as he notes the apparent contradiction between the Corinthians' status as saints and their actual conduct, writes that "man darf den Widerspruch nicht beseitigen wollen, indem man ἀπελούσασθε, ἡγιάσθητε, ἐδικαιώθητε nur von der Sündenvergebung und nicht von der faktischen Beseitigung der Sünde faßt."

[110]Käsemann (ET 1969), p.171. While this is a correct view of justification in 6:11, I regard baptism as simply one component of the wider conversion event. See also Lightfoot (1895), p.213 who comments on 6:11 that "we are justified not simply by imputation, but in virtue of our incorporation in to Christ." Ironically, the role which the Bultmann of 1924 grants to justification in enabling the believer to fight against sin seems to anticipate Käsemann's view, formulated in oppostion to Bultmann, that the gift of righteousness has the character of power.

[111]Seifrid (1992), pp.52-53 alleges that Sanders fails to pay sufficient attention to the indicative and imperative in Paul. This failure expresses itself in Sanders' refusal to countenance the idea that Paul understood righteousness as in any sense 'imputed.' While Sanders is undoubtedly right that there is no hint of any idea of a 'fictional' righteousness in Paul, there are other senses in which one can take 'imputed.' Recognising the importance of the indicative and imperative opens the way to a righteousness that is 'real' since the boundaries of immorality have been redefined, and therefore the behaviour of converts actually changes on the basis of a change in their identity and their union with Christ. Yet this is also imputed in the sense that Paul did not teach 'perfectionism', and lapses such as the court cases in Corinth do not result in an immediate and automatic forfeiting of believers' status as saints. Paul proclaims a 'real' righteousness, but one with an eschatological reservation.

provided by Paul's use of 6:11 as the launching pad for a discussion of prostitution in which participatory terminology is dominant.[112] The sharp distinction which Sanders develops between what he sees as Paul's two uses of δικαιόω therefore begins to appear strained, even in what he claims as the clearest example of one of them.[113] This distinction will be subjected to further criticism in **Appendix 2** but, in relation to 6:9-11, it should be observed that there is nothing so very surprising in Paul's blending of terms and concepts if what he intends is a demonstration that the Corinthians' behaviour stands in contradiction to their conversion. In order to provide such a demonstration he also provides a full and rounded picture of conversion. As we saw in relation to calling (**3.4.1**), Paul uses language in fresh and creative ways when describing conversion.

4.3.5 Summary

1 Cor. 6:9-11 is a text which can profitably be used to explore Paul's understanding of conversion. As a unit it cannot in any significant sense be termed 'traditional'. Although it contains within it some traditional elements, there is no evidence that they had ever previously been brought together in anything approximate to this form. Tradition cannot be used to distance Paul from his own words here, and these verses have as much claim as any other single text to represent the 'real' concerns of Paul. In 6:9-11 Paul concludes his criticism of the Corinthians' quarrels and court cases by reminding them of their conversion. Their current conduct is unacceptable because it stands in contradiction to who they now are, their identity having been transformed by their conversion. A vital component of their transformation was the recognition that their former lives were thoroughly polluted by sin, and the sinners catalogued in the vice list of 6:9-10 include those whose behaviour would previously have seemed perfectly acceptable to Paul's converts. Faith in Christ has stretched the boundaries of immorality,

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[112]Fee (1987), p.248 says of the indicative - imperative form of 6:9-11 that "it obviously functions as the basis for all the imperatives in this letter, including the one that immediately follows." See also Augustine (ET 1845), Sermon CXI and Sermon CXII, who repeatedly and specifically relates the vice list of 6:9-10 to 6:15.

[113]For Sanders' categories see above, pp.120-22. **Appendix 2** will discuss Rom. 6:7, where Sanders finds what he regards as the clearest example of Paul's participatory use of δικαιόω.

and in areas crucial to its organisation and functioning, principally sex and religion, Paul's converts now reject the dominant values of Graeco-Roman society.

This has considerable consequences in terms of practical consciousness, implying both that behaviour which would formerly have met with instinctive approval should now strike the convert as a glaring lapse in behavioural competence, and that the boundary of the convert's social world is now the believing community, which provides the context within which practical consciousness is constructed. The complete and wide-ranging nature of this transformation of identity, and its place at the climax of Paul's argument, make it unlikely that he intends the three verbs which describe it (6:11) all to mean the same thing. Instead, Paul provides a three-dimensional description of conversion the elements of which are distinct but interdependent. When considered individually, the climactic verb δικαιόω is quite clearly forensic. Yet this legal imagery functions as part of the overall description of transformation in which Paul bases his criticism of the Corinthians' conduct on who they now are. This implies not only the forgiveness of sins but also freedom from the power of sin, so granting these verses a participatory flavour. 1 Cor. 6:9-11 provides an example of Paul's interpretation of the different categories of his thought by each other. Its fruitful exegesis requires attention to the manner in which Paul brings these categories together rather than to the question of their relative importance.

4.4 Conclusions

As was suggested at the outset of the chapter, unrecognised sin has emerged from both 1 Cor. 14:20-25 and 1 Cor. 6:9-11 as a significant component of Paul's understanding of Gentile conversion. It is in the revealing of truth about previous conduct that the true position of men and women before God is apprehended, and the power of Christ to transform that position demonstrated. From this observation flow the following points:

(i) The evidence examined suggests that Paul did not conceive of the position of Gentiles before conversion as one in which they were unable to live up to their own moral expectations. Instead their difficulty is a false contentment stemming from their failure to recognise their sinful actions as such. This means that Gentile conversion is not the resolution of a pre-existing crisis, but is itself both crisis and resolution. The convert moves from false contentment to crisis to security in Christ.

(ii) The crisis wrought by the realisation of unrecognised sin brings a transformation which is not only an inward affair of the conscience, but also involves a radical change of moral and social identity. Those actions previously accepted, but now recognised as sinful, are ones approved by Graeco-Roman society as a whole. Paul's converts are required to break with many of the dominant values of the society from which they come and in which they still live. This implies a reconstruction of practical consciousness, the social context for which is the believing community.

(iii) Paul uses a variety of vocabulary to describe this transformation of identity, and in some cases blends terms and concepts in order better to express its various dimensions. This means that each of the terms and concepts warrant attention in their own right, but also that each of them serves the overall purpose. Their meaning in context is therefore also partly determined by it, and by each other. In 1 Cor. 6:9-11 we saw that this produced an instance of δικαιόω which is both strongly forensic, and yet also has a participatory flavour. Paul himself, to some degree, seems to allow each category to interpret the other. One of the commonest category distinctions used by scholars to analyse Paul's theology is therefore under strain.

5

A Jewish Convert

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Questions and Selection of Evidence

We have seen that while Paul prohibits a change of ethnic identity by those whom God has called, he also considers ethnic identity to be of no significance in determining who is called (**3.3.6**) Whether one is a Jew or a Gentile is something which Paul considers irrelevant to one's standing before God. We also saw that, both implicitly in 1 Cor. 14:20-25 (**4.2**) and explicitly in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 (**4.3**), Paul characterises the past lives of his Gentile converts in a negative way. Behaviour regarded as perfectly acceptable by Graeco-Roman society now has to be recognised as sinful, and therefore avoided. One might expect the corollary of such a negative portrait of the Gentile world to be a positive one of Judaism, and I entirely agree with Sanders when he suggests that, before his conversion, Paul "must have distinguished between Jews, who were righteous (despite occasional transgressions), and 'Gentile sinners' (Gal. 2:15)."[1] However, if the post-conversion Paul were to maintain this distinction, how could this be reconciled with his insistence that ethnic identity is irrelevant to one's standing before God? Does Paul really discuss Jewish and Gentile conversion on the same basis?

To ask this major question implies further component ones. What vocabulary does Paul use to discuss Jewish conversion? Is it the same as that which he uses of Gentile converts, and does he use it in the same way? How should it be classified? Does Paul regard unrecognised sin as equally important in the conversion of Jews? If so, does this imply that for the Jew who comes to Christ conversion is, in the first instance, the cause of a crisis rather than the resolution of one? Does this further

[1]Sanders (1977), p.499.

imply the same sort of criticism of the dominant values of Jewish society as he levels against the Gentile world? Does Paul expect the impact of conversion upon the practical consciousness of a Jew to be the same as with Gentiles, or are there significant differences? To answer such questions requires attention to passages discussing the only Jewish conversion about which Paul informs us in any detail, namely his own.[2] This chapter will therefore explore Gal. 1:11-17, Phil. 3:4-12 and 1 Cor. 4:1-5. The first of these has been selected because Paul there applies the concept of calling to himself, and the second because Paul there discusses his conversion in terms of contrasting types of righteousness. In both cases he directly contrasts his life before his conversion with his life after it, something we have seen him do in relation to his Gentile converts in 1 Cor. 6:9-11. These two passages are customarily included in discussions of Paul's own conversion, but to place 1 Cor. 4:1-5 alongside them is something of a departure.[3] Yet although Paul does not directly discuss his own conversion in this text he does speak of his own unrecognised sin, thereby enabling a comparison with what he has said of his Gentile converts in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and 1 Cor. 14:20-25.

5.1.2 The Status of the Selected Evidence

In the course of exploring Paul's understanding of Jewish conversion, this chapter will argue that what Paul tells us of his own conversion suggests that his experience played a significant part in shaping important elements of his theology. For some, the attempt to demonstrate this employing Paul's accounts of his own conversion is methodologically suspect. Gaventa writes, "Paul does not construct his theology out of the content or experience of his conversion. Indeed, the reverse is true. It is Paul's

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[2]Some may object that Paul's call to be an apostle means either (a) that he is not a convert, or (b) that his conversion is therefore significantly different to that of others, be they Jew or Gentile. Point (a) will be directly disputed through exegesis of Gal. 1:11-17, and on point (b) see **3.3.3**.

[3]I have chosen to discuss 1 Cor. 4:1-5 rather than Rom. 7, another passage often included in discussions of Paul's conversion. This is principally because the former offered the chance to break fresh ground whereas the latter has received extensive discussion. I regard Rom. 7 as a piece of biographical reconstruction in which Paul discusses his pre-conversion life, but does so entirely from his new Christian perspective, i.e., he retrospectively discerns an inability to obey the commandments of which he was not aware at the time.

understanding of the gospel that brings about a re-construction or re-imagining of his past."[4] Paul's understanding of conversion shapes his accounts of his conversion and not vice versa. While providing excellent sources for Paul's understanding of conversion, his accounts cannot be relied upon to accurately reveal the impact of his conversion experience. Here we have the application to Paul of the view, discussed and criticised above (**1.2.2**),[5] that conversion accounts are always unreliable. It is certainly true that converts invariably engage in biographical reconstruction. Paul's later theological understanding does inevitably influence his accounts of his conversion, especially those elements which evaluate his previous life. What he says about his conversion decades later is not necessarily an accurate reflection of what he thought about that experience a day, a week, or a month after it had occured. Yet to conclude from this that his conversion cannot have helped to shape his theology is a false deduction. Humans beings are interpretative creatures, for whom to have an experience is to interpret it. Raw experience is something to which the historian simply does not have access. Were we in the privileged position of being able to interview Paul the day after his conversion, we would still only have access to his interpretation of the experience, not to the experience itself. Although that more immediate interpretation might be different from subsequent ones, it would not enjoy a privileged epistemological status by virtue of being an early one. Nor would it thereby be innocent of theological considerations. Whether it should be regarded as a fresh account in comparison to later stale ones, or as an immature ill-considered response compared to later mature ones, would itself be very much a matter of interpretation.

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[4]Gaventa (1986a), p.313. A similar assertion is made in relation to Phil. 3:4-12 by Räisänen (1992), p.29 who, rejecting the idea that Paul derives his antithesis between justification by faith and justification by works of the law from his conversion experience, asks whether he does not "instead interpret his call experience in v.9 in retrospect in terms of the contrast between the two righteousnesses?" Interestingly, this does not seem to be a position that Gaventa maintained for long. She expresses a far more balanced attitude towards the significance of his conversion experience for Paul's theology in Gaventa (1986b), pp.18-21.

[5]See especially, pp.16-18.

Thus, although the retrospective self certainly develops, it does not therefore *necessarily* distort, either with regard to the experience of conversion, or to its consequences for the beliefs of the convert.[6] If Paul provides us with accounts which suggest that his conversion experience had certain theological consequences, then there is no prior reason to doubt that the connection is genuine. His strong claim to have received his law free gospel δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (Gal. 1:12) must be taken seriously. How great a period elapsed between the conversion experience itself, and the reflections upon it which gave rise to such consequences, is a related but *different* question. By arguing that elements of Paul's theology are derived from his own conversion experience, I am not thereby implying that the theology of his letters is *necessarily* the same in all important respects as that which he held in the immediate aftermath of his conversion.[7] Nor am I suggesting that subsequent experiences played little or no part in the development of Paul's theology. Doubtless the problems and practicalities of mission also influenced him but, whatever these were, one doubts that they were unique to Paul. Such problems and practicalities were also faced by others who did not respond by advocating a law free gospel. Paul's distinctive attitude is best explained in relation to his experience of conversion.[8] We therefore reach a similar

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[6]For an argument that it does, see Fredriksen (1986), p.33, quoted above on p.16. In relation to Paul, the same is rather implied by Watson (1986), p.30: "All we know of Paul's conversion is how he chose to understand it in polemical contexts many years later."

[7]The assumption that such an implication does follow is one of the shared misconceptions marking the fierce debate between Seyoon Kim and Heikki Räisänen over the origins of Paul's theology. Kim argues that all the essential elements of Paul's theology can be attributed to his conversion and that they emerged in its immediate aftermath. Räisänen disputes this, especially in relation to Paul's views on the Law, assuming that if these views were the subject of development, then they cannot be regarded as in any significant sense a consequence of Paul's conversion. See Kim (1984) and Räisänen (1987b) and (1992), pp.17-44. However, should the different conversion accounts with which Paul provides us prove to be consistent, it would seem reasonable to conclude that that the elements of his theology influenced by his experience had reached a settled form by the time he wrote his epistles. Apart from the possible exception of 1 Thessalonians, this is accepted by Räisänen (1987b), pp.404-06.

[8]Nock (1933), pp.190-91: "The Twelve in Jerusalem, and no doubt most of their early adherents, had found in the Gospel of Jesus and the Gospel which took shape around Jesus the integration and completion of the religious traditions in which they had always lived. For them he came to fulfil, and not to destroy. Paul, on the other hand, had regarded them and theirs as apostates and had thrown himself heart and soul into the struggle to suppress them. For him to become a Christian meant in the first instance a complete change of face." Watson (1986), pp.31-36 argues that Paul began preaching a law free gospel to Gentiles in reaction to the failure of mission to Jews, but offers no explanation as to why the reaction of Paul and his colleagues was so different from that of other Jewish Christians.

conclusion with regard to the relationship between Paul's theology and his conversion experience as we did for converts in general.[9] Whatever stages of development Paul's theology passed through, it is not credible to suppose that theology simply determined the interpretation of experience (or indeed vice versa). Rather, the two stand in a reciprocal relationship, each influencing, and being influenced by, the other.

5.2 Paul's Conversion and His Attitude Towards Judaism - Gal. 1:11-17

5.2.1 Call as Conversion

I argued in a previous chapter (**3**) that the most distinctive and innovative aspect of Paul's use of the concept of calling is that it denotes conversion. Yet it is precisely the appearance of καλέω (1:15) in Paul's own account of his experience which has been used by Krister Stendahl as the basis on which to argue that this experience was not a conversion.[10] In Stendahl's view Paul was called not converted, the two terms functioning as opposites rather than as equivalents. Asserting that "here is not that change of 'religion' that we commonly associate with the word *conversion*,"[11] Stendahl points to the undoubted fact that Paul's language in Gal. 1:15 has its background in Is. 49:1-6 and Jer. 1:5. "Paul describes his experience in terms of a prophetic call similar to that of Isaiah and Jeremiah. He felt hand-picked by God after the prophetic model to take the message of God and Christ to the Gentiles."[12] This leads to the conclusion that "if, then, we use the term 'conversion' for Paul's experience, we would also have to use it of such prophets as Jeremiah and Isaiah. Yet we do not speak

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[9]See above, p.21.
[10]See Stendahl (1976), pp.7-23.
[11]Stendahl (1976), p.7. His italics.
[12]Stendahl (1976), p.8. Kim (1984), pp.91-99 argues that Is. 6 is also directly relevant to Paul's understanding of his conversion. But the only supporting evidence which relates specifically to Gal. 1:11-17 is Kim's assumption that the terms ἀποκαλύπτειν / ἀποκάλυψις themselves imply that Paul had a vision of the enthroned Christ.

of their conversion, but rather of their call."[13] In Stendahl's view, Paul was not so much converted to be a Christian as called to be an apostle.

That Paul did not change religions has been readily conceded by the vast majority of scholars,[14] yet many have been reluctant to follow Stendahl in concluding from this that Paul was not a convert. The degree of transformation involved in Paul's about-turn from persecutor of the church to advocate of the gospel, and the change of community which resulted from this transformation, lead many to maintain that conversion is an appropriate term to describe his experience.[15] Stendahl's definition of conversion is an inadequate one. Further, as we saw in chapter 1, Paul applies the concept of calling not only to himself but to all those in the churches to whom he writes, twice specifically including both Jews and Gentiles (Rom. 9:24, 1 Cor. 1:24).[16] Given that the latter have abandoned the Graeco-Roman gods for Christ, Stendahl would presumably have no difficulty in accepting them as converts who have changed 'religion'. Yet if that is the case, then it is far from clear how Paul, as a Jew, can have been called *rather* than converted. This would require the unlikely premise that when Paul refers to both Jews and Gentiles as called, the verb καλέω simultaneously functions as an equivalent to conversion for Gentiles, but as its opposite for Jews. Instead one must accept either that these Jewish believers in Christ had changed 'religions,' or that a

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[13]Stendahl (1976), p.10.

[14]Perhaps too readily conceded. One wonders whether a proper awareness of Paul's continuing commitment to the Jewish people has not produced an underestimation of the distance which he puts between himself and his past. Certainly, Paul's phrase ἐμὴν ἀναστροφήν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ (1:13), usually translated as a reference to his 'former' or 'previous' life in Judaism (RSV, NRSV, NIV, GNB, REB), suggests something now left behind.

[15]On the first of these points see Donaldson (1997), p.17 n.57; Gaventa (1986b), p.40; Sandnes (1991), p.58 n.36; Ziesler (1992), p.10. On the second see Segal (1990), p.6 & chapter 3. The significance of Paul's change of community was entirely missed by Betz (1979), p.64: "Strictly speaking, however, we cannot speak at all of a 'conversion' of Paul. As Galatians reports, Paul was 'called' to be a missionary to the Gentiles, and he changed parties within Judaism from Pharasaism to Jewish Christianity." That the same fact can be used to suggest both that Paul was a convert (Segal), and that he was not (Betz), indicates the degree to which the identification of a conversion is determined by the definition of conversion employed. See **1.1.2**. Yet, as Segal points out, religious communities play a large part in defining conversion for their converts. To deny that a change of community is a significant indicator of conversion, especially in a sectarian environment such as first century Judaism, suggests that the definition used has been strongly shaped by the conclusion desired.

[16] See pp.85-86.

change of 'religion' is not the defining characteristic of conversion. Whichever of these options is chosen, then however much one stresses that in becoming an apostle to the Gentiles Paul received "a new and special calling in God's service,"[17] and however much one considers that calling to be different from that given to other believers in Christ, this scarcely demonstrates that Paul was not a convert.[18]

Alongside these problems of definition, Stendahl's position also contains serious exegetical weaknesses. The key text is Gal. 1:15 & 16a, where Paul specifically refers to the occasion of his conversion: Ὅτε δὲ εὐδόκησεν ὁ ἀφορίσας με ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου καὶ καλέσας διὰ τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ ἀποκαλύψαι τὸν υἱὸν αὐτοῦ ἐν ἐμοί. It is difficult to know from this statement at what point in time Paul places his call. The mention of his mother's womb makes it clear that he considers God to have set him apart from before birth and the reference to his call is grammatically parallel, καλέω appearing in the form of another aorist participle. Some consider this to indicate that Paul thought of his call as a pre-natal event.[19] Were this view to be correct, then Paul would here be reflecting rather precisely the content of Is. 49:1-6 where, as a precursor to a call to be a light to the Gentiles (49:6), the servant proclaims of God that ἐκ κοιλίας μητρός μου ἐκάλεσε τὸ ὄνομά μου (49:1). Stendahl might even be felt to have been overly cautious in asserting simply that "Paul has alluded to Old Testament passages in this account."[20] Rather than simply alluding to Is. 49:1-6, Paul might be thought to be modelling his

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[17]Stendahl (1976), p.7. He later says of Paul, p.12, that "the 'I' in his writings is not 'the Christian' but the Apostle to the Gentiles'."

[18]Although we should not diminish the significance of his apostolic task to Paul, it would, in fact, be a mistake to emphasise the distance between his calling and that of other Christians. See **3.3.4**. If Paul had wished to emphasise the distinctiveness of his calling over and against that of other believers, why should he then appear to emphasise the connection between his calling and that of his readers by placing them in direct relation to one another. See Rom. 1:1 & 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:1 & 1:2.

[19]Munck (1959), p.25: "Election and call point in advance to the moment when God revealed Christ to him on the road to Damascus." Also Nickelsburg, (1986), pp.203-04: "Parallel phrasing within Gal. 1:15 suggests that God's choice of Paul from the womb and God's gracious call were one and the same."

[20]Stendahl (1976), p.8.

statement upon it.[21] Yet at the same time, Stendahl's wider argument would be undermined. If Paul says that he was called before he was born, then καλέω is not the term which he uses to refer to the adult experience through which he came to know Christ. Instead, that experience is directly referred to only by the verb ἀποκαλύπτω in 1:16a, Paul having earlier stated that he received his gospel δι' ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ (1:12). One could certainly still speak in a general sense of Paul's being called to be an apostle,[22] or, more specifically, of his experience as having marked the activation of his call, but one could not place a description of Paul's experience as a call in direct opposition to a description of that experience as a conversion.

In fact, one doubts that καλέω should here be taken as a reference to a pre-natal call. The general influence of Is. 49:1-6 upon Paul's words is clear but, while they may imply it, these verses do not contain the idea of being set apart, whereas Jer. 1:5 does.[23] A reference to a pre-natal call would also be unique in Paul, who otherwise uses the concept of calling to denote the point at which believers came to be in Christ.[24] Paul draws on the scriptures in order to describe that experience, but not exclusively upon Is. 49:1-6. In this instance Paul probably does so in a way that focuses not primarily on chronology, but instead on what God has done.[25] The reference to his having been set apart before birth naturally has chronological implications, but is first and foremost a means by which to emphasise the quality of God's grace, and the invincibility of God's purpose, which not even Paul's decision to persecute the church could deny or

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[21]Munck (1959), pp.25-26 argues that Paul's words resemble Is. 49:1-6 far more closely than Jer. 1:5, as does Sandnes (1991), pp.61-62, although, unlike Munck, he does not wish to conclude from this that Paul thinks of himself as having been called before birth.

[22]Of course, he himself does so at Rom. 1:1 and 1 Cor. 1:1.

[23]Although the Septuagint version of Jer. 1:5 expresses the idea using the verbs ἁγιάζω and τίθημι rather than ἀφορίζω.

[24]See p.86 n.132. Note especially the position of καλέω in the sequence of salvific divine actions at Rom. 8:29-30.

[25]Martyn (1997b), p.157: "Paul does not speak, then, in a biographical fashion, as though it were his intention to say, 'Let me tell you about my life and experiences!' He speaks, rather, in a prophetic fashion, concentrating attention in the first instance on God: 'Let me tell you about God and about what he has done, singling me out before my birth and calling me in his grace to proclaim his good news!'" See also Longenecker, R. (1990), p.30; Sandnes (1991), pp.60-61.

overcome.[26] Given this, both the aorist participle καλέσας and the aorist infinitive ἀποκαλύψαι may be taken as referring to Paul's adult experience.[27] The occasion on which Paul came to believe in Christ was also the occasion on which he was called.

This conclusion may make it appear that Stendahl is at last on firm ground. Paul receives a call like that of the prophets of old. Yet despite the suggestion in subsequent research that, "all the essential elements in a prophetic call narrative ...are found in Gal. 1:15-16a,"[28] one simple fact means that this is not so. The Septuagint contains not a single narrative relating the call of a prophet which contains the verb καλέω. In all the places where one might have expected to find it such as Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 2, and, above all, Jeremiah 1, it is absent. God is said to 'call out' to Moses and to Samuel, but in these cases καλέω refers to the audible sound of God's voice rather than to the commission given to the prophet.[29] There is, of course, the call to the servant in Is. 49:1 but, as we have seen, this is indisputably a call given before birth. The complex questions of interpretation surrounding the identity of the servant also leave it unclear precisely to whom this call is given.[30] Sandnes argues that one popular ancient interpretation, albeit far from the only one, understood Is. 49:1-6 to refer to Isaiah himself but, as Sandnes admits, all the midrashic texts substantiating this are later than Paul's letters.[31] While the concept of calling is clearly one which Paul draws from

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[26]But some do insist that a commission in two stages is intended, Paul having been set apart before birth and called as an adult. See Burton (1921), p.49; Calvin (ET 1965), p.20.

[27]This conclusion is further strengthened if Paul's statement that God revealed his son ἐν ἐμοί is rendered 'in me' rather than 'to me', and so as a reference to the beginning of God's revealing of Christ to others through Paul's ministry. It then becomes still more natural to take καλέω as also referring to Paul's experience. So Dunn (1993), p.64; Lightfoot (1865), p.83. In favour of 'to me' are Burton (1921), pp.49-51; Calvin (ET 1965), p.21; Martyn (1997b), p.158. Other commentators approach the issue differently, assuming that 'in me' would indicate an internal experience, and 'to me' an external revelation. One doubts whether Paul would have been very much concerned as to the difference between the two.

[28]Sandnes (1991), p.59.

[29]See Ex. 3:4; 19:3,20 and 1 Sam. 3, where καλέω is used eleven times to describe God speaking to Samuel. In Samuel's case the voice calling to him in the night says nothing of his future role, but simply conveys a message of condemnation for the family of Eli.

[30]See above, pp.62-63.

[31]Sandnes (1991), pp.62-63.

prophetic texts, especially second Isaiah,[32] there is a severe shortage of prophets who are themselves said to have been called.

This means that the logic of Stendahl's argument simply will not hold. It does not follow that if we take call and conversion as equivalent, and so term Paul a convert, then we would have to take the absurd step of using the same term of the prophets. For it to do so, the prophets would have to describe their experiences as calls, but they do not. Even if they did, one wonders if it would inevitably follow that because both the prophets and Paul use the same terms to describe their experiences, then we too must always use the same terms to describe those experiences. This logic would seem also to imply its opposite, namely that if the prophets and Paul use different terms to describe their experiences then we cannot apply the same terms to them both. This lands us in the truly absurd position of legitimately being able to speak of Paul's experience as a call, but not that of the prophets. Of course, no-one has ever objected to scholars speaking of the call of the prophets, and there would be no grounds for doing so. The only difference between the two cases is that to speak of Paul's conversion jars theological raw nerves in the post-Holocaust world, whereas to speak of the call of the prophets does not. Describing the experience of the prophets as a call and that of Paul as a conversion both involve the use of etic vocabulary, something which must be done carefully if it is not to conflict with emic descriptions, but which, in and of itself, is a perfectly proper procedure. As he consistently does elsewhere, in Gal. 1:15 Paul uses the language of calling to refer to conversion.

5.2.2 A Jew Set Apart

Yet if we are to term the experience Paul describes in Gal. 1:11-17 a conversion, how are we to characterise the change involved? How are those who accept that it was not a change of religion to account for Paul's having made a statement which

[32]See p.59 n.24.

suggests that it was? Paul's reference to ἐμὴν ἀναστροφὴν ποτε ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ (1:13) certainly sounds like a straightforward reference to Judaism as something in Paul's past, something which he has now left behind.[33] This difficulty is met head on by Dunn, who points out how rare it is to find the term 'Judaism' in texts of this period, arguing that it had its origins in the Maccabean revolt and therefore carried particular connotations.[34] "It was not simply a neutral description of 'the religion of the Jews' as we might wish to use it today. From its earliest usage it carried overtones ...of a religion which identified itself by its determination to maintain its distinctiveness and to remain free from the corruption of other religions and peoples."[35] When Paul uses it he does so in order to indicate the strength of his then desire to reinforce and protect the boundaries of Israel. The implication is that although Paul has indeed abandoned such 'Judaism,' which is "characterized by the attitudes and life-styles documented in verses 13 and 14,"[36] this does not constitute what today would be termed a change of religion. Dunn attempts to strengthen his position further by showing that Paul's reference to his ζηλωτὴς ὑπάρχων τῶν πατρικῶν μου παραδόσεων (1:14) is an indicator of his Pharisaic committment to oral Halakhah, something which distinguished the Pharisees from their "less faithful contemporaries,"[37] and evidenced "their desire to keep the law with scrupulous accuracy and exactness (*akribeia*)."[38] The very concept of zeal is also

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[33]Burton (1921), p.44 understands it in precisely this way: "The very use of the term (Judaism) in this way is significant of the apostle's conception of the relation between his former and his present faith, indicating that he held the latter, and had presented it to the Galatians, not as a type of Judaism, but as an independent religion distinct from that of the Jews."

[34]See Dunn (1993), pp.55-59 and Dunn (1998), pp.346-54. It is noteworthy that at (1993), p.65 Dunn specifically denies that Paul was a convert, but at (1998), p.348 allows that he was, and uses the term 'conversion' several times in his discussion of Paul's experience.

[35]Dunn (1998), p.348. In what follows I accept Dunn's characterisation of Paul's Judaism as separatist, but argue against him that, for Paul, separatist Judaism *is* 'the religion of the Jews.' My own use of the term Judaism in this context therefore embraces first century Judaism as a whole when viewed from Paul's perspective. This does not, in itself, conflict with the observation that Paul may have employed the term Ἰουδαϊσμος here in order to emphasise discontinuity between his past and present life, whereas at Rom. 9:4 when he wishes to identify himself with the Jewish people he employs the term Ἰσραηλίτης.

[36]Dunn (1993), p.57.

[37]Dunn (1998), p.349.

[38]ibid. Not all scholars accept that Paul's reference to ancestral traditions refers specifically to Pharisaic observances. For the view that it is a reference to the Mosaic law in general see Calvin (ET 1965), p.19; Martyn (1997b), p.155. For the view that it embraces both Pharisaic regulations and the law more generally see Longenecker, R. (1990), p.30; Matera (1992), p.59. For the view that it refers to oral

portrayed as redolent of an overwhelming desire to maintain the separateness of Israel, Dunn citing a string of texts linking zeal with a willingness to kill in order to defeat threats to the boundaries of Israel.[39]

Much of the detail of Dunn's exegesis is convincing. It makes very good sense that Paul, relating the experience which led him to consider himself the apostle to the Gentiles, should discuss his previous life in a manner which emphasises his then concern to maintain the boundaries of Israel. Such a contrast serves to highlight the dramatic nature of God's intervention in his life. Less convincing is the move from this observation to the conclusion that Paul's entire critique of Judaism relates primarily to the desire to maintain its separateness, a desire which constitutes "a misunderstanding of God and of God's promised (covenanted) intention to bless also the nations."[40] Dunn argues that the main focus of Paul's criticism of the law is on "its boundary-defining role, that is, as separating Jew from Gentile."[41] This reflects the impact of Paul's experience, for "Paul did think of his conversion as a conversion from Judaism, but from Pharisaic Judaism, a Judaism which kept itself separate from other Jews, not to mention Gentiles."[42] It is particularly striking that "in the same breath (Gal. 1:13-14) Paul voices consciousness of separation both *of* Judaism *from the other nations* and *within* Judaism *from other Jews*."[43] But if Paul really is primarily concerned to stress the error involved

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traditions, but not necessarily to specifically Pharisaic ones, see Burton (1921), pp.47-48. Others take the reference to ancestors in a more restricted sense and debate whether Paul refers specifically to that which he learnt in his family home. See Betz (1979), p.68 n.118; Bruce (1982), pp.89-91. Dunn's position is based on that of Lightfoot (1865), p.82 who cites parallel uses in Josephus (*Antiquities* 13.6, 13.2) to support the contention that the ancestral traditions are oral Pharasaic ones. The reference at *Antiquities* 13.2 to the Pharisees having introduced teachings κατὰ τὴν πατρῴαν παράδοσιν seems conclusive. The parallels between what Paul says here and what he says at Phil. 3:5, where he specifically mentions that in relation to the law he was a Pharisee, provide further support for Dunn and Lightfoot.

[39]See Dunn (1998), p.351. The texts include Gen. 34; Num. 25:13; 1 Kings 18:40; 2 Kings 10:16-17,30; 1 Macc. 2:23-26.

[40]Dunn (1998), p.366. Note that Dunn (1998), p.358 n.97 is careful not to argue that the 'works of the law' are only food laws, circumcision and sabbath observance. The issue at stake is that of where Paul's main emphasis falls.

[41]Dunn (1998), p.353.

[42]Dunn (1998), p.353.

[43]Dunn (1998), p.350. His italics.

in this emphasis on separation, then it should surely follow that he now regards his former life as the very worst of Judaism, a source of disgust and loathing. To be part of a most separate sect within a most separate nation would represent the perfect example of religion gone wrong. Is this the way in which Paul portrays his former life in 1: 13-14?

Certainly Paul speaks of his persecution of the church, something of which he cannot now have been proud, and the proximity of this to the statement of his zeal for ancestral tradition suggests a link between the two. Yet the intervening clause is surprisingly positive in tone. Paul states that he had προέκοπτον ἐν τῷ Ἰουδαϊσμῷ ὑπὲρ πολλοὺς συνηλικιώτας ἐν τῷ γένει μου (1:14). By saying that he had advanced within Judaism beyond many of his contemporaries Paul makes his former life appear not as the worst of Judaism, but rather as the best. His use of the term γένος (race) means that Paul is evaluating his progress against that of the nation as a whole, so implying that, if it was as a Pharisee that he achieved this advancement, his Pharisaism represents not a lamentable piece of misguidedness but a distinction of which to be proud. As Stendahl points out, Paul regards himself as having been a very successful Jew, "even when he thinks about it from his Christian perspective."[44] Although there is abundant evidence, not least in Galatians itself, that the boundaries of Judaism, as instantiated in practices such as circumcision, food laws and sabbath observance, were flashpoints at which Paul's law free gospel came into conflict with more conservative strands of Jewish Christianity, Gal. 1:11-17 does not support the view that it was a rejection of Judaism's concern to maintain its boundaries which provides the crucial underpinning of Paul's gospel.

Paul does indeed describe his former self in terms which suggest that he had been greatly concerned to maintain the boundaries of Israel, but he does not on

[44]Stendahl (1976), p.13. Betz (1979), p.68 comments on 1:14 that "such conduct (Paul's zealousness) was not extremist or a form of mindless fanaticism, but was in conformity with the contemporary expectations of what a faithful Jew ought to have been."

that account evaluate his former life as a travesty of Judaism.[45] In Paul's mind the Pharisaism moulded by that concern remained the best which Judaism had to offer. This makes it clear why it is so difficult to determine whether, at his conversion, Paul changed religion. On the one hand, if he has now left behind a life representing the best of Judaism, there is no force to the observation that "if it is proper to speak of Paul converting from 'Judaism,' this was the Judaism he had in mind."[46] Paul may well have had this Judaism in mind, but as he regarded it as the finest variety of Judaism, then any criticisms of it implicitly include all the lesser varieties. It was Judaism *per se* that Paul left behind, and viewed from this perspective, Paul did change religion. On the other hand, Paul will not simply write off his past as worthless. There is no hint that he regards his former attainments as based upon a misunderstanding of what the law required, and this evaluation of his former life in terms of achievement implies that Paul's current attitude towards Judaism is not one of straightforward rejection. So too does his having been set apart from before birth, which places his former life in Judaism within God's purposes.[47] There is something striking and unusual about a convert who refuses to denigrate that which has been left behind. In this sense, Paul did not change religion.[48]

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[45]Something also suggested by Paul's choice of the verb ἀφορίζω to describe God's selection of him as an apostle. Paul may well mean to contrast this type of separation for the sake of the Gentiles with his previous concern to maintain his separation from them but, if he regarded insistence on separation *per se* as the fundamental error of Judaism, then it would be odd to characterise his new role as an apostle using the same concept.

[46]Dunn (1998), p.348.

[47]Schütz (1975), pp.133-34 helpfully captures the paradoxical nature of Paul's statements. These verses represent "a biography of reversal ...Paul has set up a direct contradiction to the present by viewing his past as itself a negative mission directed against, rather than for, the church." Yet, "Paul regards both halves of the contrast to have been carried out under the sovereignty of and in loyalty to God. This corresponds to his view of the relationship of law and grace."

[48]These ambiguities suggest that as with the term conversion, much here depends upon how one defines 'religion'. Stendahl employs it in a somewhat slippery fashion, suggesting (1976), p.7 that Paul was not a convert because in the terms 'we' use today Paul did not change religion, and (1976), p.11 that Paul cannot have changed his religion since "people in those days did not think about 'religions'." Here is a similar failure to distinguish between etic and emic categories as we saw in relation to the terms 'call' and 'conversion.'

5.2.3 Summary

In Gal. 1:12-17 Paul describes his experience in a way which suggests that it can appropriately be termed a conversion. Stendahl's argument that Paul's use of καλέω in 1:15 indicates him to have been called rather than converted is entirely without foundation. Were it demonstrated that Paul here refers to his call as one given before birth then, in this instance, καλέω would denote neither conversion nor its opposite, and Stendahl's position would be untenable on these grounds alone. Call could not be pitted against conversion. Yet even allowing that in 1:15 καλέω does refer to Paul's adult experience, Stendahl's position suffers from fatal weaknesses. Elsewhere Paul specifically refers to Jewish as well as Gentile Christians as having been called. Further, the absence of καλέω κτλ. from the 'call' narratives of the prophets means that the fact that they were not converted cannot be used to support the contention that Paul was not converted. In Gal. 1:15 Paul uses καλέω to denote conversion. When one asks how Paul characterises his life in Judaism prior to that conversion, the answer is that he combines an emphasis on his then concern to maintain the boundaries of Israel with an estimation of the Pharisaism which promoted that concern as achieving the best which Judaism had to offer. This combination means that Dunn is unlikely to be right that Paul's criticisms of the law and of Judaism focus primarily on the desire to maintain separation. Instead Paul's criticisms embrace Judaism in general, so indicating that, in one sense, his conversion did involve a change of religion. Paul does not conceive himself as simply having exchanged an inferior brand of Judaism for a superior one. Yet in another sense it did not, since Judaism is not simply rejected. Paul regards his achievements within Judaism as genuine, and sees his life as a Jew as part of God's purpose.

One question which this summary provokes is how Paul's positive evaluation of his former life coheres with his connection of its zeal to his persecution of the church. His statements seem puzzlingly paradoxical. So too does the pattern of his argument. As we have seen, Paul (1) applies the concept of calling to himself in a way

which suggests that his call experience was a conversion, but (2) gives an evaluation of his previous life as a Jew which emphasises its achievements. The first of these seems to place his experience on the same footing as that of his Gentile converts, whose conversion he also describes using the concept of calling, but the second seems to differentiate between them, since he elsewhere describes the previous life of his Gentile converts in strongly negative terms.

5.3 Recognising and Breaking the Power of Sin - Phil. 3:4-12

5.3.1 A Blameless Jew

When we turn to Phil. 3:4-12 we find a similar, but perhaps even more paradoxical, pattern. For here there are even stronger indications that Paul continues to think of his former life in Judaism in positive terms. He insists that he has more reason than anyone else to place confidence in the flesh (3:4) and, having listed his advantages, he describes them as κέρδος (3:7). Of course, confidence in the flesh is not itself a good thing as far as Paul is concerned, and the gain that he had immediately turns out to be worth little in comparison to knowing Christ (3:8), but his positive statements should not on this account be evacuated of their force. Paul's purpose is to glorify Christ, and it is difficult to see how this can be done via a declaration that knowing Christ is better than something which is itself of little worth. The entire rhetorical force of the passage depends upon a genuinely positive estimation of Judaism, which then renders the description of it as σκύβαλον (3:8) all the more shocking. It may only be relatively positive in comparison to knowing Christ, but the force of the comparison is destroyed if we replace 'relatively positive' with 'negative'. When Paul says that he was blameless κατὰ δικαιοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ (3:6), we must take him seriously.[49]

[49]This is something commentators often refuse to do, some perceiving a tension between this statement and the argument of Romans 1-3 which, by asserting both that those who do the law will be justified before God (Rom. 2:13) and that Jew and Gentile alike are under the power of sin (Rom. 3:9), seems to clearly imply that although a perfect observance of the law would bring salvation, such an observance is impossible. See Kruse (1996), p.257; Vincent (1897), p.99; Westerholm (1988), p.161 n.52. Others find

Yet this is not the whole story. As in Gal. 1:11-17, there is something in among Paul's statements about his former life in Judaism that he could not now regard as genuinely positive, but would instead characterise as wholly negative. It would simply be perverse to propose that Paul the apostle attached any positive value, even a relative one, to his having been κατὰ ζῆλος διώκων τὴν ἐκκλησίαν (3:6). What had then appeared necessary and good, is now revealed to be the opposite. The response of twentieth century scholarship to this paradoxical pattern in Paul's statements about his conversion has been to dissolve it. Bultmann simply ignores Paul's statement that he has better reason than any to put confidence in the flesh (3:4), seeing Paul's preconversion attributes as expressions of "the self-reliant attitude of the man who puts his trust in his own strength and in that which is controllable by him."[50] Far from presenting a genuinely positive estimation of Judaism, Bultmann's Paul gives an entirely negative one. In contrast, Sanders simply ignores Paul's statement that he had been a persecutor of the church,[51] and attributes his current estimation of his past life to a single and simple-minded reversal of opinion. "Paul does not say that boasting in status and achievement was wrong because boasting is the wrong attitude, but that he boasted in things that were gain. They became loss because, in his own black and white world, there is no second best."[52] Unlike in Romans and Galatians, where he argues that there is no such thing as righteousness under the law, Paul here presents two types of righteousness of which only one is the right kind. "The only thing that is wrong with the old righteousness

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the thought of a sinless life incomprehensible and, taking ἄμεμπτος as a cultic term, argue that Paul is here speaking of blamelessness in the context of a covenant which made provision for repentance and forgiveness. See Bockmuehl (1997), pp.201-02; Dunn (1998), pp.349-50; Fee (1995), pp.308-09; O'Brien (1991), pp.379-81, Silva (1992), pp.175-76. Seeing Paul's retrospective self-description as a piece of biographical reconstruction, I take Paul's statement to imply that he had indeed kept all the commandments of the law, but that from the perspective of faith in Christ he can now see that this does not imply that his life had been free from sin. His view of both sin and the law have changed. The rich young ruler (Mt. 19:16-30; Mk. 10:17-31; Lk. 18:18-30) provides another example of someone who has scrupulously observed every commandment, but whose life is not free from sin.

[50]Bultmann (ET 1952), p.240.

[51]Caird (1978), p.540: "In all Sanders' concentration on the transfer of Paul's allegiance there is no mention of one point which Paul himself never allows his readers to forget, that at the moment of his conversion he was engaged in persecuting the church."

[52]Sanders (1983), p.44. It is hard to know who is the more patronising, Bultmann of first century Judaism, or Sanders of Paul.

seems to be that it is not the new one; it has no fault which is described in other terms."[53] Here we have a clear expression of Sanders' now famous dictum, "*this is what Paul finds wrong in Judaism: it is not Christianity.*"[54]

One feels that both Bultmann and Sanders have gone astray here. We should not seek to dissolve the paradox inherent in Paul's statements, but instead emphasise and explain it. For Paul himself seems deliberately to emphasise the paradoxical nature of his past. At Phil. 3:6 he directly juxtaposes his persecuting activity and his enthusiasm for law observance, without the intervening clause which appears at Gal. 1:14a. It is also hard to imagine that the inclusion of his persecuting activity among Paul's abundant reasons for confidence in the flesh would not have raised eyebrows in the Philippian congregation, or that Paul would have been unaware of this. His persecution of the church is the one sin which Paul includes in his description of his past. Apart from this, Paul's characterisation of his life in Judaism is entirely positive. By placing his statement that it was a product of his zeal between his claim that he had been a Pharisee and his claim to have been righteous ἐν νόμῳ, Paul makes it clear that his persecuting activity had been an expression of his commitment to Judaism. In this lies the terror of these verses: it was the best and not the worst of Paul which had lead him into sin.[55]

That Paul's persecution of the church had been the "climax of his dedicated obedience to his Jewish faith"[56] points us both to a vital similarity between Paul and his Gentile converts, and to a significant difference. The similarity is that by exposing the connection between his committment to Judaism and his persecuting activity, Paul implicitly recognises that as a Jew he, like his Gentile converts, had been under the power of Sin. The greater had been his devotion to the law, the stronger had

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[53]Sanders (1983), p.140.
[54]Sanders (1977), p.552. His italics. Also quoted above, p.41.
[55]Hawthorne (1983), p.134: "Not because Paul was evil, but precisely because he was 'good', ...he did what he later came to lament, namely, persecute the church."
[56]Stendahl (1976), p.89.

become the impulse to sin by persecuting the church. The difference is that this does not lead him to speak of his past life in terms of unrighteousness because it was his 'righteousness' that had been at the root of his sin. Even the best of him, that which was genuinely good, had been infected by sin. This suggests that Sanders is only partially correct when he concludes that, for Paul, what was wrong with Judaism is that it is not Christianity. The error into which his Judaism had led him was that of opposition to the Gospel, and so the pre-conversion Paul may, in obvious distinction from Jewish followers of Jesus, have perceived Judaism and following Christ as mutually exclusive options. His view would then have been that what was wrong with Christianity was that it was not Judaism, and this view his conversion simply reversed.[57] However, this is probably an over-simplification, since Paul had not only himself refused to accept the Gospel, but precisely out of his very zeal for Judaism had persecuted the church. What is wrong with Judaism for Paul is not only that it is not Christianity, but also the related problem that his devotion to it had not only failed to prevent him from falling into the sin of persecuting the church, but had actively prompted it. This concrete individual sin thus demonstrates the power of Sin,[58] for it was the same individual who had blamelessly kept all the commandments of the law who had fallen into this transgression of the will of God. So, paradoxically, the more Paul maintains the genuinely righteous character of all other aspects of his life as a Jew, the more Judaism stands under that power. As Seifrid comments, "It would have been possible for Paul to assume the stance which other Jewish Christians took, that the messiah's death was a supplement to Torah, if he had been willing to look upon his earlier zeal as somehow incomplete or insufficient. Yet he

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[57]Expressing it in this way should help us to see the flaws in Sanders' position. The argument that before his conversion Paul persecuted the church solely because its faith was not Judaism is dubious. Those who later became the Christian opponents of Paul the Apostle clearly saw themselves as within Judaism, and it is often argued on the basis of Acts that Paul's persecution was directed at the 'Hellenists' rather than at Christians in general (for a detailed case see Hengel (1991), pp.63-86). If this is correct it was something more specific which had so offended Paul. The fact that both Gal. 1:13-14 and Phil. 3:6 mention Paul's scrupulousness in law observance in connection with his persecuting activity suggests that the offence centred on the question of law observance. If Sanders' position is too simplistic when applied to Paul the Pharisee, then it is also likely to be too simplistic when applied to Paul the Apostle.

[58]Paul does not say this directly in Philippians but see the argument of Rom. 5:12-21, where Paul argues that Adam's single misdeed produced the reign of sin and death.

was apparently not willing to pass this judgement on himself or the Pharisaic movement of which he had been a part."[59]

Ironically, it is therefore his earlier zeal for the law which at least partly explains why Paul's critique of the law is so strong. His desire to obey the law had led him into sin, so retrospectively demonstrating its inability to save. It is quite possible that had Paul struggled with the Law prior to his conversion, had he known a guilty conscience, had he been less certain about the possibility of righteousness under the Law, then he may well have been less radical in his attitude towards the Law afterwards. As it was, the impact of the realisation that he had been sinning without knowing it, that there were things about himself which had been hidden from him, produced a total revaluation in which the Law was replaced by faith in Christ. Such a connection between Paul's recognition that his committment to the law had lead him into sin and his law free gospel, has previously been proposed by Kim, and criticised by Räisänen.[60] The latter writes that:

> Paul never hints at this connection between law and sin in connection with his conversion or his person. The assertion that sin is increased or even brought about by the law crops up in conjunction with a more theoretical dilemma: if the law does not lead to salvation, why did God give it in the first place? ...Paul never refers to his pre-Christian activities in this connection. Perhaps he realised what his expositors do not always realise: that his fanaticism for the law was not a fault of the law itself.[61]

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[59]Seifrid (1992), p.177.

[60]See Kim (1984), pp.285-88. As is often the case, Kim does not provide a sufficiently specific exegetical base for his argument, but simply asserts that the connection follows from Paul's belief that no-one is justified by the works of the law. He also overstates his case, and Räisänen convincingly rebuts Kim's assertion of a direct link between Phil. 3:9 and the justification of the ungodly in Rom. 4:5. Räisänen (1992), p.41 correctly says of Rom. 4:5 that "the 'ungodly' is here one who is not able to produce the works in question rather than a zealous legalist." As I read Phil. 3:4-12, it is Paul's recognition that he had sinned despite the fact that he was not ungodly which is decisive.

[61]Räisänen (1987b), p.412.

Yet unless Paul still regards his persecution of the church as not having been sinful,[62] then in Gal. 1:13-14 and Phil. 3:6 he does provide heavy hints of a connection between law and sin. Further, Paul's fanaticism for the law is fanaticism in our eyes not his. Such an assessment is our value judgement. As Phil. 3:6 and the above quotation from Seifrid imply, even as a Christian, Paul regarded his previous attempt to keep the law as rather a successful one. Had he come to regard his performance of the law as poor, then he might well have made the distinction which Räisänen suggests between the law itself and his own conduct. Actually regarding his pre-conversion conduct as a faithful reflection of the law, he does not make such a distinction.[63]

Finally, the fact that an issue is discussed in a theoretical manner does not of itself exclude the influence of experience upon one's conclusions. Indeed, there is one text in which Paul explicitly connects the law and sin without raising the theoretical question which Räisänen poses. At 1 Cor. 15:56 Paul concludes his discussion of resurrection with the statement that τὸ δὲ κέντρον τοῦ θανάτου ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἡ δὲ δύναμις τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ νόμος. Commentators have always been puzzled by the sudden appearance of such a strong statement connecting the law with sin in a context where the law is not under discussion, especially as it is true of 1 Corinthians as a whole that "nowhere do the issues that have arisen, either between him and them or between them internally, reflect concern over the law."[64] Virtually all cite Rom. 5:13 and 7:7-25, so connecting the content of what Paul says to the more theoretical consideration that law increases the seriousness of sin by making it a matter of active rebellion against

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[62]Surely not likely given his statement at 1 Cor. 15:9 that οὐκ εἰμὶ ἱκανὸς καλεῖσθαι ἀπόστολος, διότι ἐδίωξα τὴν ἐκκλησίαν τοῦ θεοῦ.

[63]Thus, Stendahl (1976), pp.80-81 gets things entirely the wrong way round when he uses Paul's robust pre-conversion conscience as a basis on which to argue that Paul's critique of the law is limited.

[64]Fee (1987), p.806. It is purely the element of surprise in this statement which leads some commentators to tentatively suggest that 1 Cor. 15:56 may be a gloss, but there is no textual evidence to support this claim. See Conzelmann (ET 1975), pp.292-93; Héring (ET 1952), p.182; Moffatt (1938), p.268.

stated commandments,[65] but none argue that the question of the purpose of the law is what provokes 1 Cor. 15:56b. Rather, Paul's statement is "a theological construct,"[66] a settled opinion which he here applies to another issue. Given that that this opinion is that the law is the power of sin, and given that in Gal. 1:11-17 and Phil. 3:4-12 we have seen Paul connect his persecution of the church to his zeal for the law, then it is difficult to see a valid case against there also being a connection between Paul's theological opinion and his conversion experience. It is true that in his biographical remarks at 1 Cor. 15:8-10 Paul does not connect his persecuting activity to his zeal for the law. However, we should note his statement that despite the unworthiness resulting from his persecution of the church, God's grace towards him was not in vain (κενός), and that as a result he can say that περισσότερον αὐτῶν πάντων ἐκοπίασα (15:10). This should be compared to 15:58 where, having assured the Corinthians that Christ gives them the victory over sin and death, Paul goes on to urge them to persevere, εἰδότες ὅτι ὁ κόπος ὑμῶν οὐκ ἔστιν κενὸς ἐν κυρίῳ. What is true of their labour as Christians has been true of his as an apostle. If their labour can be effective because Christ has given them victory over the power of sin that is the law, then presumably the same is also true of Paul.[67]

Thus although Paul does not explicitly connect the law and sin in relation to his own experience, it is clearly implied by what he does say. In his former life in Judaism he had been under the power of sin. This conclusion makes it clear that

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[65]Barrett (1971b), p.383; Godet (ET 1886), p.446; Goudge (1903), p.160; Héring (ET 1952), p.182; Moffatt (1938), p.268; Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.378; Witherington (1995), p.311.

[66]Fee (1987), p.806. Note especially Rom. 7:8b where Paul expresses the same point negatively: χωρὶς γὰρ νόμου ἁμαρτία νεκρά.

[67]The sequence of Paul's references to sin in 1 Cor. 15 also repays observation. Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.293 n.43 says of 15:56 that "in content it is prepared for by vv.3-5; the hearer, when it is read out, hears the creed in the background; then v.17." Thus there is first a statement that Christ died for concrete sins (15:3), and finally a statement concerning the power of sin (15:56), with an intervening statement which seems to bridge the two by stating that if Christ has not been raised then the Corinthians are still in their sins (15:17). This corresponds to the sequence of the argument of Romans 1-8, which first deals primarily with sin as transgression (chapters 1-4), and finally with sin as power (chapters 6-8), but has chapter 5 as a bridge between the two. Note also the similarity between Paul's exclamation of thanksgiving at 1 Cor. 15:57, and that at Rom. 7:25.

Käsemann understood, or perhaps rather misunderstood, something important about Paul's theology when he argued that it portrays the Jew as the representative type of religious humanity.[68] In retrospect Paul can indeed see that even as he had believed his religion to be taking him closer to God, it had in fact been taking him further away. Yet Käsemann's type-casting of the Jew is offensive, and even dangerous,[69] because he links it with a particular and pejorative definition of 'religion' as something bad. For Käsemann piety is always something entirely negative, but it is not so for Paul. By any reasonable measure Graeco-Roman society was religious and yet Paul certainly does not equate Judaism with it, for passages like 1 Cor. 6:9-11 implicitly contrast Judaism with the idolatry of Graeco-Roman religion. For Paul, Judaism was good religion when compared to paganism. The Jew thus functions for Paul not as the abstract representative of a corrupt religious humanity, but as the concrete historical embodiment of that which is good. He knew that he was not a Gentile sinner (Gal. 2:15), but one who had every reason to be confident in his status as a Jew (Phil. 3:4-6). By understanding all piety as alike Käsemann too dissolves the paradox which Paul establishes in Phil. 3, namely that evil came even out of that which was genuinely good. That even the very best of human life should turn out to be under the power of Sin is what makes it possible for Paul to regard it all as σκύβαλον compared to knowing Christ (3:8). In his eyes it is imperative that human beings should cast aside all that they understand as gain in order to know Christ, for all such gain is inevitably infected by sin.

Phil. 3:4-12 is therefore a paradoxical piece of biographical reconstruction. The things which now appear as nothing more than confidence in the flesh, then appeared the things of greatest value. Yet Paul will not condemn his own Jewish past in the same way as that of his Gentile converts. In Paul's view, his

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[68]See Käsemann (ET 1971), pp.70-78. Ironically, this unfortunate characterisation is closely connected to Käsemann's hostility to salvation history, a hostility based on the consciousness that Nazism had developed its own secularised salvation history. Käsemann has been criticised for speaking of Jews as a kind of timeless paradigm of human piety rather than as flesh and blood historical beings. See Way (1991), p.188.

[69]See the sharp criticisms of Boyarin (1994), pp.209-14.

righteousness had been as real as their unrighteousness. In this respect his past and their own could not have been more different. In a passage like 1 Cor. 6:9-11 Paul pushes his Gentile converts to the recognition that the whole of their past lives were polluted by sin, and that they had then numbered amongst οἱ ἄδικοι, but this is not what he says of himself as a Jew. The status of Jew and Gentile apart from Christ is therefore that of the righteous and the sinner. Yet these differences mask what Paul can retrospectively see is a more fundamental similarity. As has often been pointed out, there is nothing in Phil. 3:4-12 to support the notion that before his conversion Paul had struggled with a guilty conscience. What is more, there is nothing in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 or 1 Cor. 14:20-25 to suggest that Paul's Gentile converts had done so either. They had not recognised their sins of unrighteousness for what they were and Paul had not recognised his zealous persecution of the church as a transgression, despite the fact that he had been guided by the law. Unrecognised sin is a problem in both cases.[70] It is his earlier failure to recognise as sin the one concrete transgression that he can now retrospectively name as such which helps lead Paul to the conclusion which he maintains so vigorously elsewhere, namely that Ἰουδαίους τε καὶ Ἕλληνας πάντας ὑφ' ἁμαρτίαν εἶναι (Rom. 3:9).[71]

5.3.2 Two Types of Righteousness

Paul's devotion to the law led him into the sin of persecuting the church, and recognising this activity as sin retrospectively demonstrated his life to have been under the power of sin. His criticism of his Jewish faith is therefore not simply that it is not Christianity, and the contrast between two types of righteousness has a wider

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[70]Unrecognised sin is part of what it means to be under the power of Sin. That Paul sees no contradiction between this and human responsibility for transgressions committed can be seen from Rom. 1 where the willful transgressions of the Gentiles (Rom. 1:19-23), cause God to hand them over to Sin (παραδίδωμι - Rom. 1:24,26,28). This handing over implies a loss of self-control such that what ought to be plainly apparent as sin is no longer apparent as such (Rom. 1:32). See Westerholm (1997), pp.29-30: "Sin affects human minds. To sin against the light one has can only lead to the darkening of one's powers of perception (no doubt because, in the inevitable process of justifying their conduct to themselves and others, sinners skew their own moral and religious sensibilities)."

[71]Seifrid (1992), p.179: "It was not Paul's 'introspective conscience' which led him to a fresh understanding of righteousness. Rather, it was Paul's very boldness of conscience regarding his earlier practice of Judaism which allowed him to come to a new understanding of righteousness."

basis than that. Such a summary invites us to explore further the nature of these two types of righteousness.[72] Beginning with that which he has now abandoned, what does Paul mean by δικαοσύνην τὴν ἐν νόμῳ (3:6b) and ἐμὴν δικαιοσυνήν τὴν ἐκ νόμου (3:9)? The vast majority of commentators answer this question by expounding the content of Paul's description of his life as a Jew in 3:5-6. Here Paul speaks both of status (circumcised, Israelite, Benjamite) and of accomplishment (zealous and blameless).[73] Paul himself seems to have recognised this distinction between the categories of status and accomplishment,[74] also making clear, by a further reference to the law in 3:9, that his own righteousness is indeed the righteousness under the law referred to in 3:6. At one level, this distinction between status and accomplishment makes it very clear what Paul does and does not mean by this kind of righteousness. He cannot intend to portray Judaism as a crude religion of works righteousness since this would render redundant all those items in the status category. To be circumcised, to be an Israelite, and to be a Benjamite are not Paul's accomplishments. Far from his having worked for them, they are circumstances which have been appointed by God.[75] Yet neither can Paul intend to portray works as peripheral to Judaism. He includes his

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[72]Sanders (1977), p.505 does not explain the two types of righteousness but instead finds it significant that here there are two, whereas elsewhere Paul argues that there is only one. This indicates that "the only thing wrong with the old righteousness seems to be that it is not the new one; it has no fault which is described in other terms." Yet both mentions of Paul's former righteousness are qualified. In relation to his past Paul does not speak of righteousness *per se* or righteousness from God. For Paul to speak of 'righteousness *under the law'* and of a 'righteousness of *my own'* is itself an indication of the double-edged nature of this righteousness. Sanders' point would only have force if Paul spoke of his previous righteousness in an unqualified way, but still rejected it because it did not involve faith in Christ.

[73]Sanders (1983), p.44 notes this, but does not explain it or why it should be ignored. Dunn (1998), p.370 argues that "we should also beware making a distinction in kind between the first and second halves of the catalogue in 3:5-6," but also fails to explain why. If we do ignore the distinction between status and accomplishment, then the description of 3:5-6 simply becomes a very longhand way for Paul to say that he had been a devout Jew. This is unlikely, for Paul's point is not that he had been as good a Jew as those advocating circumcision, but that he had been a better one. He had *more* reasons for confidence in the flesh, and describes them in detail.

[74]Fee (1995), p.307 says of Paul's claim to be a 'Hebrew of Hebrews' that "this is the 'swing' term, summing up the preceding three and setting the stage for the final three." Whether this summing up is primarily genealogical, i.e., a claim to be a Jew born of exclusively Jewish stock, or primarily cultural, i.e., a claim to belong to a family which maintained the Jewish culture and the Aramaic language even in a diaspora setting, is much contested. Fee opts exclusively for the former. In favour of the latter see Bruce (1983), p.108; Martin (1976), p.128; O'Brien (1991), p.371; Silva (1992), pp.176-77; Vincent (1897), p.97.

[75]Seifrid (1992), p.174: "Consequently, when he refers back to 3:6 ...he does not imply that such a personal righteousness was entirely self-acquired."

Pharisaism, his zeal and his blamelesssness in a specifically soteriological comparison between his own righteousness and that which comes from God through Christ.[76] These are his achievements attained through his devotion to the works of the law, and he previously regarded them as contributing to his salvation. Paul's own righteousness under the law was one in which it was assumed that salvation was reached via a combination of grace and works, but Paul now insists on justification by faith *alone*.[77] The "true circumcision place their confidence not in human worth and work but in the Spirit of God."[78]

Yet what is less clear is how Paul can include those items in the status category as part of his own righteousness. True, they are personal to him in that they are what he was. But, given that they were appointed by God, how could they produce a righteousness which was his own *as opposed to* that righteousness which comes from God (3:9)? The answer lies in the virulence of sin, which has infected the whole of creation. Under the impact of his recognition that all which was wholesome in his pre-conversion existence had served to promote his persecution of the gospel, Paul now believes that no circumstance within that creation, even that of being Jewish, can contribute to salvation. There is nothing about his life, whether it be by birth or by achievement, which can do any good. It all belongs to the sphere of the σάρξ (3:4), and salvation requires a fresh act of God from outside which creates citizens of heaven (3:20). To rely for salvation on such righteousness of one's own is therefore folly, hence the weight of attitudinal language within the passage.[79] 'My own righteousness' is a self-reliant attitude, but there is nothing distasteful or abnormally corrupt about the self relied upon.[80] The error lies solely in the reliance for, as an obedient Jew, Paul stood at the

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[76]That the comparision is specifically soteriological is made clear by the fact that the ultimate benefit of knowing Christ is resurrection from the dead (3:11).

[77]See above, p.48.

[78]Bockmuehl (1997), p.194.

[79]See Gundry (1985), pp.13-14 and O'Brien (1991), pp.395-96. Paul speaks of boasting (καυχάομαι), of trust or confidence (πεποίθησις), and of deeming or considering (ἡγέομαι).

[80]One wonders whether prior to his conversion Paul would then have understood righteousness under the law as 'my own righteousness.' Is this how a devout Pharisee would have wished to characterise his

pinnacle of human status and achievement.[81] He regards its infection by sin, and its consequent inability to save, as the ultimate demonstration of the human need of Christ.

Yet how is this need to be satisfied? As it is expressed in 3:9f., what does Paul intend by justification by faith? What does he mean by τὴν ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει which comes διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ? Here the student faces a bewildering range of opinions as to the dominant terms and categories in the context. Some argue that righteousness itself is the dominant term and interpret it using forensic categories. It is a "status which brings vindication, not a behavioural righteousness. The context of eschatological expectation and the exhortation to live in the light of this hope, which characterizes the whole of Phil. 3, inclines one towards a forensic interpretation from the start."[82] Others deny that the term righteousness is of prime significance, but disagree as to which terms and categories provide the best alternative. For Fee, the dominant idea in the context is that of knowing Christ (3:8). "The aim of everything is 'to know Christ' relationally ...it seems highly likely that the

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obedience to *God's* law? The phrase sounds rather like a negative value judgement delivered from Paul's new perspective of faith in Christ, a statement to the effect that 'this is what my former convictions and those of my current opponents amount to, this is where it all leads.' Another example of an argument from Paul which has a 'this is where it all leads' quality about it is Gal. 2:11-21, where what begins with Peter withdrawing from table fellowship with Gentiles ends with Christ dying in vain. Dunn (1998), p.369 may therefore be correct when he writes that "the need to attain one's own righteousness was no part of traditional Jewish teaching" but wrong to conclude from this that Paul cannot mean what he appears to say in Phil. 3:9. Paul's letters may subsequently have helped to prompt a parallel process. Brown (1967), p.345 observes, "'See where it leads to ...' is a constant refrain ...that will be repeated throughout Augustine's writings of the next years. Indeed, Pelagianism as we know it, that consistent body of ideas of momentous consequences, had come into existence; but in the mind of Augustine, not of Pelagius."

[81]Calvin (ET 1965), p.273: "Paul did not reckon it necessary to abdicate from his tribe and from the race of Abraham, and make himself an alien, that he might become a Christian; but he had to renounce trust in his descent ...Paul, therefore, divested himself, not of works, but of that perverted confidence in works with which he had been puffed up." This illustrates a difficulty inherent in Sanders' decision to compare Judaism and Paul's Christianity through their soteriologies. Paul's exclusivist soteriology does not necessarily mean that he denies value to Judaism in other respects. This is obscured if one says simply that Paul regards his only error as placing confidence in something other than Christ. To put one's faith in the Graeco-Roman gods would be to place confidence in something other than Christ. Paul believes that neither Judaism nor paganism can save, but this does not mean that he regards paganism as of equal worth with Judaism.

[82]Seifrid (1992), p.175.

...theme (righteousness) exists primarily for the sake of the theme of 'knowing Christ.'"[83] In further contrast, Sanders stresses not the category of relationship but that of participation. "The soteriology of the passage - being found in Christ, suffering and dying with him and attaining the resurrection - could have been written without the term 'righteousness' at all."[84] On this view, Paul's reference to righteousness is firmly in the service of dominant ideas about participation in Christ. But while it is theoretically possible that Paul does operate here with a single dominant term and/or category, the very disagreement as to what that is suggests a different explanation. Is it not possible that Paul may have employed concepts rather more freely, using all the resources available to him in order to express the glory of gaining Christ?[85] And if meaning is at least partly determined by context,[86] then may not the meaning of any one single concept be influenced by that of the others? I will test this hypothesis with regard to Paul's use of forensic and participatory terms and categories, examining first the nature of the vital phrase εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ (3:9a), and then that of saving righteousness itself.

Adopting a position which partly foreshadows that of Sanders, Ziesler observes that "grammatically, all the statements about righteousness are subordinate to the clause 'be found in him'."[87] He takes this to indicate that the dominant clause determines the meaning of the subordinate clause, and that righteousness is therefore a

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[83]Fee(1995), p.314. Against this note O'Brien (1991), p.393: "The three expressions ἵνα Χριστόν κερδήσω (v.8), εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ (v.9), and τοῦ γνῶναι αὐτόν (v.10) are regarded as parallel and overlapping expressions of Paul's ultimate aims, that is, he desires to gain Christ completely, to be found in him perfectly, or to know him fully."

[84]Sanders (1977), p.505.

[85]Sanders (1977), pp.504-06 discusses this passage as one in which the terminology is mixed, but proceeds to argue that the participatory terms determine the point of the passage, not the concept of righteousness. Yet as Fee's highlighting of Paul's relational language makes clear, these are not the only two categories of vocabulary used. Does the idea of laying hold (καταλάμβανω - 3:12) really fit neatly into any of the three categories we have outlined? Note also the concept of calling at 3:14. One of the striking features of this passage is the vast array of vocabulary Paul uses to make his point.

[86]See **Appendix 2**.

[87]Ziesler (1972), p.148. See also Räisänen (1987b), p.409 who, employing the same observation rather differently, notes that "an interpretation couched in 'juridical' vocabulary interrupts a description of Paul's Christian existence which is given in 'participationist' terms." On this reading the main point is not that the dominant participatory clause determines the meaning of the subordinate clause, but simply that it is dominant, and the juridical vocabulary of the subordinate clause less significant.

participatory category. The believer "participates in it by faith."[88] There are two difficulties with this. Firstly, to be grammatically subordinate is not necessarily to be theologically subordinate. Having righteousness from God certainly explains what it means to be found in Christ but, since Paul does not explicitly say that this righteousness results from being found in Christ, the assertion that to be found in Christ is to have righteousness from God could equally well indicate the equivalence of the two ideas. Secondly, is εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ itself an entirely participatory phrase? Seifrid certainly does not think so since he argues that "the εὑρεθεῖν of 3:9 is absolutely eschatological in its orientation,"[89] thereby alluding to the last judgement and making clear the forensic nature of righteousness from God. Whether Seifrid is correct in asserting an exclusively eschatological orientation is doubtful, since when Paul talks of συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ (3:10), he is presumably speaking of what it means to be in Christ in this life. Yet the resurrection from the dead of 3:11 is certainly a future hope, and the whole thrust of Paul's argument in 3:12-16 is towards this future. Further, if one asks by whom Paul expects to be found in Christ, the only possible answer is surely God. There is an eschatological reference. The phrase εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ is neither exclusively participatory, nor exclusively forensic, in meaning, but contains elements of both.[90]

Given this, what of the righteousness with which one is found in Christ? If the two are equivalent, then may this righteouness also have both forensic and

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[88]Ziesler (1972), p.149. He does not argue that there are no forensic elements in what Paul here means by righteousness (see p.150 n.2) but there can be no doubt as to where the emphasis lies, which is strongly on righteousness as participation.

[89]Seifrid (1992), p.175 n.155. That is, when Paul speaks of being found in Christ, he solely means being found there at the parousia, not being found there in this life. In Seifrid's view v.3:9a is thereby further distinguished from the other participatory terminology in the passage, which he accepts has both a present and future orientation.

[90]A point missed by Sanders (1977), p.506 who arguing for the dominance of participatory categories says of Paul, "he tells us that over and over again: the goal of religion is 'to be found in Christ' and to attain, by suffering and dying with him, the resurrection." Winninge (1995), p.229 spots the problem: "The participatory connection should not be unoticed (εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῷ), as Sanders rightly has observed. However, Sanders has overlooked a problem here, because it is not entirely clear whether the reference in Phil. 3:8f. is to present participation or to final vindication. The expression εὑρεθῶ ἐν αὐτῳ is ambiguous and the following verses seem to speak against the idea that it refers to present participation."

participatory elements? That it is a righteousness *from* God (ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην), and something which Paul can speak of having (ἔχων), irresistibly suggests that it is a forensic righteousness, a gift conferred upon the believer by God.[91] One could say simply that Paul has moved from a righteousness based on status by birth and subsequent accomplishments (3:5-6), to one based exclusively on a status gifted by God through faith.[92] Yet Paul goes on to say that to have this righteousness is to know Christ and the power (δύναμις) of his resurrection. As Käsemann argues, 3:12 is an example of Paul's "dialectic of having and not quite having,"[93] whereby the righteousness of God has a double aspect so that "salvation and the things which salvation brings appear sometimes as already present by faith and baptism, sometimes as only to be realised at the end through the parousia."[94] There is something here which can not be captured by speaking of a change of status alone. To convey what Paul means by righteousness at 3:9 one cannot talk in terms that are either exclusively forensic or exclusively participatory. Phil. 3:9 is an example of that which I suggested in **2.2**, namely Paul's tendency to allow the forensic and participatory themes of his theology to interpret each other.[95] Righteousness in 3:9 is forensic, but the context in which it is placed means that for us to speak of it in exclusively forensic terms becomes misleading. This forensic use of the concept of righteousness is interpreted by the surrounding participatory terminology,[96] just as in 3:9a the participatory concept of being in Christ is interpreted by the forensic idea of being found there by God at the parousia.

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[91]For a summary of the arguments in favour of a forensic righteousness, see Silva (1992), p.186.

[92]One might argue for a behavioural righteousness from God conferred as a gift upon the believer, but the link back to the righteousness of the law in 3:5-6 and Paul's shift to justification by faith *alone*, make his primary meaning in this instance clear.

[93]Käsemann (ET 1969), p.170.

[94]ibid. He also ponts to Phil. 1:11, where Paul speaks of καρπὸν δικαιοσύνης. All agree that this means 'fruits of righteousness' and not 'the fruit that is righteousness,' but there is much dispute as to the nature of the righteousness which bears fruit. Ziesler (1972), p.151 argues that it means 'general good living' which produces more specific ethical fruits. See also O'Brien (1991), p.80; Silva (1992), p.60. Beare (1959), p.55 argues that it is forensic justification which then has ethical consequences. Rather than either of these, Paul's parallel concept of fruits of the Spirit leads one to think, like Käsemann, of a gift that is also a power.

[95]See above, pp.51-52, and **Appendix 2**.

[96]Although not necessarily only the participatory terminology. See above, p.171 n.85.

The balance between Paul's forensic and participatory terminology would be significantly altered if those who take the reference to πίστις Χριστοῦ (3:9) as a subjective genitive were proved correct. Supporters of the reading 'faithfulness of Christ' regularly make the point that in consequence the believer participates in the faith of Christ, and that justification therefore *is* participation. Forensic concepts are apparently not significant for Paul's meaning.[97] In fact, given the forensic elements we have already seen in 3:9, this is too sweeping a conclusion. A subjective genitive would not obliterate these elements. It would, however, take an important stage further Paul's interpretation of forensic concepts by participatory ones, making it more accurate to characterise Paul's technique in this way rather than as the interpretation of forensic and participatory concepts by each other.

However, while a reference to the faithfulness of Christ is certainly possible,[98] I doubt that it is the correct reading. Its proponents often point to the redundancy involved in two references to human faith, which is alleged to mean that πίστις Χριστοῦ more naturally refers to Christ's faith. This still leaves ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει referring to human faith, in qualification of ἐκ θεοῦ δικαιοσύνην.[99] Yet, given that advocates of the subjective genitive are often wary of the theological consequences of what they regard as an over-emphasis on human faith,[100] there is something anomalous

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[97]Hooker (1989), p.341: "Justification is a matter of participation; so, too, is believing." See also Hays (1983), pp.247-54 and (1997), p.60.

[98]Possible in those cases where the phrase πίστις Χριστοῦ actually occurs (Rom. 3:22,26; Gal.2:16,20; Gal. 3:22; Phil. 3:9). The argument that at Rom. 1:17 and Gal. 3:11 Paul intends his citation of Hab. 2:4 to be taken messianically is unconvincing in the extreme. For a zealous attempt to suggest otherwise, see Campbell, D.A. (1994). As Achtemeier (1997), p.85 points out, the immediate context of Rom. 1:17 focuses not on Christ, but on "the universality of a divine salvation open to faith (1:16); it is that point, as the γάρ shows, v.17 is to illustrate." The argument of which Gal. 3:11 is a part flows from a discussion of the faith of Abraham through whom all nations are to be blessed (3:8). Christ is only mentioned after the citation, and not as an illustration of it. Paul's frequent phrase ἐκ πίστεως is therefore not a shorthand reference to the faith of Christ. In relation to Gal. 3 note Hays (1997), pp.52-53, and his retraction of his earlier view that the faith of Abraham exclusively foreshadows the faith of Christ and not that of believers.

[99]So Bockmuehl (1997), pp.210-12; Hooker (1989), pp.331-33, 336; O'Brien (1991), pp.392-400.

[100]Hays (1997), p.56: "The besetting danger of the anthropological (objective genitive) interpretation ...is its tendency ...to turn faith into a bizarre sort of work, in which Christians jump through the entranceway of salvation by cultivating the right sort of religious disposition." Achtemeier (1997),

about this reading of 3:9. What does it mean to say that 'righteousness from God' is 'based' or 'depends' on human faith?[101] This difficulty is seen both by Ian Wallis, who argues that ἐπὶ should be translated 'leads to' (human faith),[102] and by Bruce Longenecker, who takes the phrase as a second reference to the faithfulness of Christ.[103] But the first of these suggestions relies on a strained translation, while the second reintroduces redundancy and leaves unexplained the means by which righteousness comes to the individual.[104] Theological balance and clarity can be restored to Paul's statement if (i) πίστις Χριστοῦ is taken as an objective genitive, and so as a reference to human faith, the means through (διὰ) which righteousness is received, and (ii) the faith upon which this righteousness from God is based is taken not as human faith, or as Christ's faithfulness, but as God's own faithfulness.

The first of these proposals does not rely solely upon general arguments in favour of the objective genitive,[105] but also on factors specific to this passage. The adjacent genitive construction in 3:8, τῆς γνώσεως Χριστοῦ, is plainly objective, as is made abundantly clear to all by the subsequent reference to knowing Christ in 3:10.[106] Further, Christ's faithfulness is notable by its absence from the narrative of his saving work in Phil. 2:5-11.[107] Given that the narrative and what Paul says of

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responds that "it is also clear that the subjective genitive urges Christians to imitate the self-giving faithfulness of Christ. Why is that not also an attempt to cultivate the right sort of disposition?"

[101]So RSV, NRSV, GNB. O'Brien (1991), p.394, and Bockmuehl (1997), p.212, both soften the difficulty by translating ἐπί as 'on the basis of', and by supplying the verbs 'received' and 'derived' respectively.

[102]Wallis (1995), p.118.

[103]Longenecker, B. (1998), pp.98-99 clearly takes τῇ as the article of renewed mention, a possibility considered but rejected by O'Brien (1991), p.400.

[104]Longenecker, B. (1998), p.99 n.14 anticipates this criticism by suggesting that the means is explained by the "participationistic note of ἐν αὐτῷ in 3:9." However, the substantially future orientation of the phrase 'found in him' makes this unlikely.

[105]For a summary see Dunn (1998), pp.379-85.

[106]Even to all proponents of the subjective genitive, except for Wallis (1995), pp.122-23, who proposes 'being known by Christ.'

[107]Given that Hays (1983) took his inspiration in launching the subjective genitive proposal from narrative theology, the omission is significant. The tendency of advocates of the subjective genitive to avert its impact by eliding Christ's faithfulness and his obedience is a methodological aberration. One cannot demonstrate the importance of a theological motif by its absence. The possibility that Phil. 2:5-11 is pre-Pauline complicates the issue slightly, but see Bockmuehl (1997), p.119: "The exegete is duty-bound to accept that Paul uses all his material because in his opinion it says what he wants, and that he

himself at 3:4-12 may correspond in other ways,[108] this absence tells against the subjective genitive at 3:9. The second proposal is, as far as I am aware, an original one.[109] Yet once one asks to whom the faith in question belongs, the fact that God is the last person mentioned makes a reference to his faithfulness the likeliest of the three possibilities. Further, whereas Paul's only possible references to the faithfulness of Christ are the disputed genitive phrases,[110] he elsewhere refers to the faithfulness of God in unambiguous fashion. He speaks of it explicitly at 1 Cor. 1:9, 1 Cor. 10:13 and 1 Thess. 5:24 (πιστός), and at Rom. 3:3 (πιστίς). This last instance is particularly significant since Paul here links God's faithfulness with His righteousness, contrasting it, and His truthfulness, with human unrighteousness and falsehood.[111] Dunn characterises Paul's meaning as "righteousness from God's faithfulness."[112] The reference in Phil. 3:9 to a righteousness from God ἐπὶ τῇ πίστει displays a similar pattern of thought. Paul's description of the righteousness with which he hopes to be found in Christ should be understood as 'that (which comes) through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on (his) faith(fulness).'

5.3.3 Summary

Through our exploration of Gal. 1:11-17 we saw that Paul applied the concept of calling to his own conversion just as he does to that of his Gentile converts but that, compared to what he says of their former lives, he evaluates his previous life in Judaism positively. These two observations appeared to pull in opposite directions, the

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means what he says." Had Paul wished to introduce the faithfulness of Christ into the narrative he could have done so.

[108]For a discussion of these parallels, see Hooker (1989), pp.331-33.

[109]Although Chrysostom (ET 1843), p.131, speaks of true righteousness as "that which is from the faith of God (ἡ ἀπὸ πίστεως τοῦ θεοῦ)." The difficulty, of course, is that it is again unclear whether this is a subjective or an objective genitive.

[110]See above, p.174 n.98.

[111]Käsemann (ET 1980), p.79: "Paul identifies πίστις and δικαιοσύνη τοῦ θεοῦ by making them parallel, as is possible from the OT understanding of God's righteousness as his prevailing covenant faithfulness."

[112]Dunn (1988), p.139. Rom. 3:3 therefore unfolds a key element ('from faith to faith') in the thematic statement of 1:17. Note that Hays (1997), p.41 agrees with Dunn, and against Campbell, D.A. (1994), that the phrase ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν (1:17a) means 'from God's faithfulness for our faith.'

one suggesting an identical understanding of Jewish and Gentile conversion to Christ, the other a rather different understanding of the two. Examining Phil. 3:4-12 has helped us to explain these tensions. Although his life as a Jew was not marked by the multiple transgressions of the Gentiles, Paul can retrospectively see that the one sin he can name resulted from his devotion to Judaism and his zeal for the law. Evil had come forth from good, so demonstrating that, as a Jew, he too had been under the power of sin. Thus, the two dimensions of sin which Paul speaks of in his letters were one in his own experience. In the failure to recognise his transgression for what it was lay his enslavement to the power of sin. As in the case of Gentiles, unrecognised sin is of considerable importance.

Real differences mask even more fundamental similarities between Jewish and Gentile conversion, and it is these similarities which allow Paul to use the same vocabulary in relation to his own conversion as he does in relation to that of Gentiles. As with calling, Paul applies the concept of righteousness to both. This concept addresses the problem of sin in at least two ways:

(i) In his use of righteousness in Phil. 3:4-12 Paul integrates two aspects of his thought, allowing forensic and participatory terms and concepts to interpret each other. Although the balance would be tipped towards participatory categories were the phrase διὰ πίστεως Χριστοῦ (3:9) taken as a subjective genitive, this is not the correct reading. Thus, to answer a human plight consisting both of the

burden of transgressions and of enslavement to the power of sin,[113] Paul speaks of a righteousness that is at once both forensic and participatory.[114]

(ii) Righteousness by faith provides an answer to the dilemma of unrecognised sin. Even although he recognises he is not perfect, and so presumably could *no longer* speak of himself as blameless, Paul can still look forward with confidence on the grounds that κατελήμφθην ὑπὸ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ (Phil. 3:12). The righteousness by which he is now possessed is not his own, and is therefore not vulnerable to his lapses.

5.4 The Necessity and Limits of Self-Knowledge - 1 Cor. 4:1-5

5.4.1 Examining the Self

This last point is confirmed by a passage where Paul speaks of the possibility of unrecognised sin in his Christian life. At 1 Cor. 4:3-4 Paul states: ἐμοὶ δὲ εἰς ἐλάχιστον ἐστιν, ἵνα ὑφ' ὑμῶν ἀνακριθῶ ἢ ὑπὸ ἀνθρωπίνης ἡμέρας· ἀλλ' οὐδὲ ἐμαυτὸν ἀνακρίνω. οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα, ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ δεδικαίωμαι, ὁ δὲ ἀνακρίνων με κύριός ἐστιν.[115] Reading what scholars have to say about this, one is struck by a failure to take the statement at face value. If it is the claim of innocence (οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα) which is felt to cause difficulties then it is proposed either that Paul meant his assertion that he has a

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[113]Sanders incorrectly asserts (1977), p.499 that "Paul actually came to the view that all men are under the lordship of sin as a reflex of his soteriology: Christ came to provide a new lordship for those who participate in his death and resurrection." It may be true that Paul did not deduce the lordship of sin from the observation that everyone transgresses, but passages like Gal. 1:11-17 and Phil. 3:4-12 suggest that he recognised the lordship of sin in his own experience, once he analysed that experience in the light of Christ. Even though he had not transgressed when judged by the commandments of the law, this had not saved Paul from the lordship of sin. See also Martyn (1997a), p.144 n.8.

[114]Thus I do not follow Sanders in seeing the forensic aspects of Paul's theology as an answer to the problem of transgressions and the participatory aspects as an answer to the problem of enslavement to the power of sin. Rather, both solutions together provide the answer to both problems.

[115]As we have already seen, pp.112-13, the vocabulary of Paul's subsequent statements in vs.4:4b-5 and its close resemblance to that of 1 Cor. 14:20-25 leaves no doubt that this is indeed a reference to the possibility of unrecognised sin.

clear conscience to be taken merely hypothetically,[116] or that he is asserting his innocence only in relation to the exercise of his ministry as an apostle.[117] The first of these proposals simply lacks all support from the text, and does not deserve to be taken seriously. The second can at least appeal to the fact that it is indeed Paul's ministry as an apostle which is under discussion, but rather overlooks the point that if it is possible to be free of all knowledge of sin in one area of life, then presumably it is also possible in every other area of life. Thus, we have to allow Paul's statement of a lack of consciousness of sin its full impact. Yet, we should surely also do the same for his assertion that this lack of consciousness of sin does not mean that there is none (ἀλλ' οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ δεδικαίωμαι). Stendahl quotes 1 Cor. 4:1-5 in order to support his point that "Paul, the Christian, is just as sure of himself as Paul, the Jew,"[118] but his translation into English simply omits v.4a, so that his text reads "I do not even judge myself, but I have not been justified by this, but it is the Lord who judges me." This overlooking of οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα means that the question of unconscious sin simply does not arise.[119] Elsewhere Stendahl explicitly addresses v.4a, but simply regards Paul's statement that his clear conscience does not justify him as hypothetical. In reality, a positive verdict from God is assured.[120]

For his part, Theissen too seems to want to deflect the impact of Paul's countenancing of the possibility of unconscious sin, even though its existence is crucial to his own argument. He writes, "we must not view Paul in the light of this (Protestant) culture of guilt and conscience. What we find in Paul is that he recognises unconscious motives - but even so does not feel guilty."[121] This statement is satisfactory as far as it goes. Paul's calmness in the face of unconscious sin is indeed striking and deserves to be explored, but surely we must first acknowledge that 1 Cor. 4:4 is rather good evidence

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[116]Lightfoot (1895), p.198; Plummer & Robertson (1911), p.74; Barrett (1971b), p.102.
[117]Calvin (ET 1960), p.88; Fee (1987), p.162 n.21.
[118]Stendahl (1976), p.14.
[119]Stendahl (1976), p.15.
[120]Stendahl (1976, original 1963), pp. 90-1.
[121]Theissen (ET 1987), p.62 n.8.

for the notion that Paul did indeed examine himself in order that he might avoid sin.[122] Against this view might be pitted v3b, ἀλλ᾽ οὐδὲ ἐμαυτὸν ἀνακρίνω (but I do not even examine myself), which could be taken to prove the direct opposite. Yet in its context, the emphasis here is not that Paul refuses to examine himself, but that, like the Corinthians, he is not competent to do so with certainty.[123] This is a competence possessed solely by God. Indeed, unless v.3b is read in this way, then this statement and that of v.4a, οὐδὲν γὰρ ἐμαυτῷ σύνοιδα, simply cancel one another out, as for Paul to say that he knows nothing against himself requires that he first ask himself the question. A declaration of innocence can only follow an examination. Thus Paul examines himself in order to avoid sin, but does not consider that such examinations are inevitably successful. A clear conscience does not necessarily imply an absence of sin.

Although Paul was certainly not unique in examining himself, this approach to the practice does seem distinctive. In his discourse *On Anger*, the philosopher Seneca gives an account of his daily self-examination. Each night before sleep he examined his conduct during the day in minute detail with the end result that "the soul has either praised or admonished itself."[124] Here there is no hint of the possibility that the judgements Seneca reaches about himself could be wrong, whereas Paul flatly refuses to accord objective status to the verdict of his self-examination.[125] He may have sinned in ways that he does not realise, and so he is not competent to make a certain examination of himself, a feeling which we have already seen expressed in v.3b. Thus, Paul appears to have a quite finely balanced attitude towards self-examination. The possibility of unrecognised sin grants self-examination significance in the attempt to

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[122]Despite the quite proper reaction against its misuse in order to prevent Christians from receiving the sacrament, it is surely also difficult to explain 1 Cor. 11:27-34 as anything other than a demand to develop an interior life. See 1 Cor. 11:31 in particular.

[123]Chrysostom (ET 1839), p.136; Godet (ET 1886), p.209; Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.76; Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.82n.5; Weiss (1910), p.99.

[124]Seneca, *On Anger*, 3.36.2. If this does not count as introspective then what does? The notion that Paul, or for that matter Augustine, had the first introspective conscience therefore seems mistaken. See also Marcus Aurelius, *Meditations*, 5.11 who states that one should always ask to what purpose one is presently using one's soul: παρ᾽ ἕκαστα τοῦτο ἐπανερωτᾶν ἑαυτὸν καὶ ἐξετάζειν.

[125]See Sevenster (1961), pp.97-102.

avoid it, but simultaneously places a limit on that significance since one cannot be certain that one has succeeded. It counts for something, otherwise it could not form part of Paul's defence to the charges levelled against him by some of the Corinthian Christians, but it certainly is not everything, since it cannot be entirely trusted. If we ask why not, then the answer is that in refusing to accept his own estimation of his conduct as an objective one, Paul is refusing to repeat an old mistake. Reflection upon his own conversion has made him aware of the possibility that he may have committed sins without recognising them as such. It is therefore no accident that one can find parallel statements of innocence in other ancient texts, or one can find parallel statements of God's ability to discern sins of an individual hidden from others, but they do not display Paul's awareness of the possibility of sin hidden from the self.[126] The degree to which he conceives of human moral judgement as frail and fallible is distinctive.[127]

This conclusion has been reached by means of an examination of 1 Cor. 4:4 which insists upon taking seriously both parts of Paul's statement there. However, we must also pay heed to v.5 which, even as it speaks of the bringing to light of things now hidden in the darkness and of the disclosing of the purposes of the heart, concludes with the expectation that the Lord's return will result in each one receiving praise (ἔπαινος) from God. One might have expected Paul to have allowed that this exposure of things hidden could bring criticism for some and, as our earlier quotation from Theissen suggested, this failure to do so indicates that he does not feel either guilty at, or threatened by, the thought that he could have committed unconscious sins.[128] This

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[126] Theissen (ET 1987), pp.81-95 has a helpful discussion of these. As he notes, Philo stands out as a little different from the others. Philo argues that the soul (ψυχή) knows everything about the rest of a person, but is not itself fully known. However, this is not specifically related to knowledge of sin. See *On the Cherubim* 113-15, *On the Creation* 69.

[127]Barrett (1971b), p.102: "A good conscience is an invention of the devil. Paul has one, but sets no store by it." Although this puts things a little starkly, it is consistent with Paul's frequent attacks in 1 Cor. upon wisdom and knowledge. It seems that for Paul all purely human insight is inherently flawed. See in particular the attack upon wisdom he has just made in 1 Cor. 3:18-23.

[128]This apparent tension has led some German commentators to suggest that the earlier part of 1 Cor. 4:5 (καὶ....καρδιῶν) appears formulaic, and must be a quotation from an apocryphal writing. See Weiss (1910), p.99 and Lietzmann (1969), p.19.

freedom from guilt or anxiety is compatible with what Paul has recently said of Christian leaders in 1 Cor. 3:15, but also seems to go beyond it, for there, although the inadequate worker is saved, there is scarcely any question of active praise. While it is not stated directly in 1 Cor. 4 itself, Theissen is doubtless correct when he argues that Paul's confidence is rooted in his relationship with Christ, and he uses the discussion in Rom. 8:26ff. of God's intimate knowledge of the individual through the Holy Spirit to support this. Here, the fact that God knows each one so well is an entirely positive thing for the Christian, indicating that guilt is overcome.[129] It would therefore appear that, for Paul, conversion does not only bring a revelation of the true position of one's life and the true nature of one's conduct, thus raising the question of guilt; it also answers that question by dealing with it through Christ (Rom. 8:33-34).[130] To say this is essentially to restate a conclusion we reached in relation to 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and 14:20-25. Conversion is in a sense a process of judgement which anticipates the final one, but which leads to the possibility of a new life rather than to condemnation.[131]

This tells us the sense in which we should understand Paul's use of δικαιόω in 4:4. The language of 4:5 makes it abundantly plain that Paul is thinking of the day of judgement.[132] When he says he is not justified by the fact that he is not aware of anything against himself, he means that it is not this lack of awareness of sin which will secure him a favourable verdict on that day. Yet the form of the verb is perfect passive (οὐκ ἐν τούτῳ δεδικαίωμαι), hence literally 'I have not by this been justified,' and the first reference to God's judicial activity in 4:4b takes the form of a present participle (ἀνακρίνων). As we have already seen in relation to 14:24, an

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[129]See Theissen (ET 1987), pp.111-14.

[130]Bultmann (1924, ET 1995), p.212: "If man only has a positive relationship with God when he knows God's χάρις, that is to say when he knows himself to be a sinner, then it follows that man can only understand himself in a real sense as a sinner before God when he knows of God's grace."

[131]See **4.2.1**.

[132]Whatever the precise details of one's understanding of righteousness here, the meaning is clearly a forensic one, since the imagery used by Paul is entirely legal. This is not an occasion when he interprets forensic concepts using participatory ones or vice versa.

ἀνάκρισις was originally a preliminary pre-trial hearing or investigation.[133] Paul therefore also thinks of justification as something which a person either has or does not have in this life. As well as looking to the parousia, his statement has a present orientation.[134] He implies that the right standing which he enjoys with God is not the result of a clear conscience but of something else.[135] If his justification were on the basis of his deeds, then he could not be confident, since the possibilty of unrecognised sin renders his conscience an unreliable guide. As it is, relying upon his relationship with Christ, he is confident of praise when God judges (4:5), whatever the outcome of the present ἀνάκρισις (4:4b).[136]

An examination of 1 Cor. 4:1-5 therefore confirms that righteousness by faith answers the dilemma of unrecognised sin. What Paul says here of himself as a Christian is consistent with he says in Gal. 1:11-17 and Phil. 3:4-12 of his life as a Jew and his subsequent conversion. It also suggests that Paul discerns a significant, if also clearly limited, role for self-examination in the Christian life. This brings us to the one question set at the beginning of the chapter which we have not yet considered, namely that of the impact of conversion upon the practical consciousness of Jewish converts.[137]

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[133]See p.114. Thus when Paul uses this term he refers to preliminary judgements made in the present. Note that when warning the Corinthians not to pass judgement on him before the parousia (4:5), he switches to κρίνω. They would be attempting to bring forward something which ought to be reserved until then.

[134]Something denied by Godet (ET 1886), p.210 and Winninge (1995), pp.231-32, who takes these verses as a 'particularly significant' example of the use of δικαιόω to refer to final vindication.

[135] For a specific denial of this, see Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.77. Fee (1987), p.162 n.24 cautiously suggests that the idea of right standing with God may not be entirely absent; Barrett (1971b), p.102 writes as if it is self-evidently the dominant idea in the context, citing Rom. 4:5 and the justification of the ungodly. Perhaps because opinion is so split, most other commentators simply ignore the issue.

[136]Sanders (1977), pp.515-18 misses this when he cites these verses to illustrate a distinction between Paul's use of the term 'righteousness' to mean saved by grace, and to mean punished or rewarded according to deeds. Taking 4:1-5 as an illustration of the latter, Sanders says that in contrast "when the question concerns righteousness as the goal of religion, Paul insists that Christians *have been* justified by faith in Christ." But since not *having been* justified by a clear conscience is precisely what Paul refers to in 4:4, then either Sanders has 4:1-5 on the wrong side of his contrast, or Paul here straddles both sides of it.

[137]We have seen an impact on both Jewish and Gentile converts in terms of assumptions relating to ethnic and social status (**3.3.6**, **3.3.7**). The former is confirmed by the argument of this chapter, especially in relation to Gal. 1:11-17. However here I focus on wider moral issues, comparing what Paul says of himself to that which we have seen him advocate in relation to Gentile converts (**4**).

In line with Paul's positive estimation of Judaism there are fewer changes required in how behaviour is assessed than in the case of Gentile converts. He can identify an unrecognised sin in his pre-conversion life, but there is nothing comparable to the expansion of the boundaries of immorality which he urged on his Gentile converts (see **4.3.3**). The conduct which they would previously have accepted but are now to shun is conduct which Paul, as a Jew, would already have regarded as sinful before his conversion. In this respect, conversion to Christ would bring little change to his Jewish practical consciousness.

Further, when an apparent suggestion of misconduct (4:1-3) forces Paul to reflect and to discuss his behaviour at the level of discursive consciousness, he can discern no divergence between his actual conduct and his practical consciousness, no lapses in competence. Yet, despite this, he refuses to consider himself justified by this. Paul does not perceive a need for change in his practical consciousness, nor any failure on his part to comply with it but, even so, he distrusts his practical consciousness. Such distrust is understandable given his pre-conversion clear conscience, which presumably reflected a practical consciousness to which persecuting the church was a display of competence. So too is Paul's distrust of what had then been the principal source of his practical consciousness, namely the law. Hence, perhaps, the value of the introspective conscience for Paul. Although much of his ethical teaching is entirely compatible with the law, the law is not now its basis. Without such a guide there is a greater need for self-conscious self-examination, a greater need to subject practical consciousness to reflection at the level of discursive consciousness. Yet this too has limitations, as 4:1-5 shows. For all Paul urges correct behaviour, and strives for it, it is not this which Paul relies upon but Christ, and this reliance is the same for Jew and Gentile.

5.4.2 Summary

In 1 Cor. 4:1-5 Paul both clearly states that he has a clear conscience, and that, despite this, there is the continued possibility of his committing sins without

recognising them as such. This suggests that he accords self-examination a significant, if limited, role in the Christian life, and that Stendahl is wrong to dismiss it as unimportant to Paul. On the one hand Paul uses his clear conscience as part of his defence of his conduct, on the other such a conscience is not necessarily a reliable guide. Remarkably, Paul does not feel threatened by this, but confidently expects to receive praise from God at the parousia. The basis of this confidence is that, while his lack of awareness of sin has not justified him, Paul nevertheless has been justified, the present tense of the discussion indicating that he does not here conceive of justification in entirely future terms. His clear conscience at this point is consistent with Paul's descriptions of his earlier pre-conversion life, and suggest that the impact of conversion upon his practical consciousness is far less than in the case of Gentiles. As a Jew, his reflexive assessments of his own behaviour stand in little need of reconstruction. Yet the fact that a clear conscience is not a reliable indicator of the absence of sin also suggests a considerable distrust of practical consciousness. Important as correct and competent behaviour is for Paul, it is Christ who is to be relied upon.

5.5 Conclusions

Throughout the chapter we have repeatedly observed the same paradoxical pattern of differences and similarities. Paul characterises his pre-conversion life as a Jew very differently from that of his Gentile converts, expressing himself considerably more favourably in relation to the former than the latter. Yet despite these differences, there is a more fundamental similarity. Paul's experience of conversion and his realisation of the problem of unrecognised sin have taught him that even what is genuinely good in human life is infected by sin. All have transgressed and are under the lordship of sin, a common plight which is answered by Christ. The following points can be made in support of this summary:

(i) In both Gal. 1:11-17 and Phil. 3:4-12, when contrasting his past and his present, Paul does not denigrate his former life in Judaism but characterises himself as a successful Jew.

(ii) In both passages Paul specifically mentions his persecution of the church in a way which connects it with his devotion to the law. Had he regarded his persecuting activity as sinful he would not have undertaken this activity, but he only came to recognise it as such after his conversion. Through this recognition, Paul also realised that sin had enjoyed dominion over his life without his knowledge.

(iii) This connection between the law and unrecognised sin played a significant part in shaping Paul's insistence that all are under the power of sin, and that justification by faith and justification by works of the law are mutually exclusive alternatives. Paul's own conversion experience was an important influence upon his theology.

(iv) In Gal. 1:11-17 and Phil. 3:4-12, Paul applies the same vocabulary to his own conversion as he elsewhere applies to that of Gentiles. There is nothing in his use of the terminology of calling, or that of righteousness, to suggest that it is appropriate to describe Gentile Christians as converts, but Jewish Christians as something else.

(v) As in his application of the concept to Gentiles (1 Cor. 6:9-11, Rom. 6:7), the righteousness of which Paul speaks in Phil. 3:4-12 is neither exclusively forensic, nor exclusively participatory, but one in which each of these categories interprets the other.

(vi) The content of 1 Cor. 4:1-5 is consistent with this, suggesting on the part of Paul the Christian an awareness of the continued possibility of unrecognised sin, and a consequent, but limited, role for self-examination. Both these imply what could, in terms of structuration theory, be characterised as a mistrust of practical consciousness.

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Conclusions to Part 2

Having explored Paul's understanding of conversion, it is now possible to return briefly to the three broad questions posed at the outset.[1] The conclusions reached are as follows:

(i) Paul's theology of sin, and his insistence on justification by faith, were significantly influenced by his own conversion experience. The role played by unrecognised sin in both his own conversion, and that of Gentiles, enables Paul to assert the fundamental equality of Jew and Gentile before God. It does so despite the fact that it is only in the case of Gentiles that conversion demands a transformation in the ethical dimensions of practical consciousness.

(ii) Forensic categories matter to Paul, and recent attempts to suggest otherwise have been misguided. However, they do not matter to him at the expense of participation in Christ, or of other aspects of his thought. To play the different categories of his thought off against each other is a mistake. Paul is prepared to be creative in his attempts to describe conversion, and he sometimes allows forensic and participatory terminology to interpret each other.

(iii) It does not follow that because the communal and cosmic levels of his thought are important to Paul, the faith of the individual is less so. In the human plight characterised by unrecognised sin, it is ignorance of concrete individual transgressions which demonstrates the power of sin. Since this plight concerns all levels of human existence, so too does the solution offered by Christ. It is an error to play the different levels of Paul's thought off against each other.

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[1] See above, pp.49-50.

In terms of further research on Paul's understanding of conversion, these conclusions suggest the need for studies which examine the means by which Paul combines the various categories and levels of his thought. One focus of this might be a search for other occasions, beyond those I have identified, on which Paul allows different categories of his thought to interpret each other. Here the details of how Paul performs this operation could be examined more precisely than has been possible within the scope of this study. To what degree does Paul fuse the terms and categories which he allows to interpret each other? More generally, such studies may require greater attention than has been customary of late to the individual, to religious experience, and to forensic categories. This is not because these are the truly central elements of Paul's thought which render others subsidiary, but because Paul is, in my opinion, a synthetic thinker. To neglect these elements of his thought in favour of others, or vice versa, is to distort his thought. What he joined together in his attempts to express the truth that had shattered and remade his world, contemporary scholarship has put asunder. I do not mean to imply by this that Paul is a systematic thinker. He is not, but an examination of the frayed ends of a hacked-apart Gordian knot provides only poor solutions to its puzzle. Given that Paul was an advocate of a new faith in a cross-cultural context, it is not surprising that he should bring together disparate existing intellectual resources in order to express his message. If we wish to understand and interpret him, then our focus should be primarily on that process, on the tying together, and not on breaking his synthesis apart in an attempt to identify its component parts and assess their relative importance.

PART 3

THE CORINTHIANS' UNDERSTANDING OF CONVERSION

Corinthian Conversion and Graeco-Roman Culture

7.1 Indigenisation and Practical Consciousness

Even those advocates of conversion whose endeavours meet with success discover that their ability to control the process is limited. Converts bring their existing cultural resources to the task of interpreting the new faith, and the degree to which this interpretation matches that of the advocate varies. A measure of indigenisation is inevitable,[1] and Paul and the Corinthians are no exception.[2] Paul's teaching is not the only factor influencing the Corinthians' understanding of their conversion and its consequences. The Graeco-Roman society and culture within which the Corinthians live is also important. That 1 Corinthians consists largely of attempts to 'correct' their conduct in relation to various issues is, in part, a tribute to this influence. Yet if the existence of such influence is plain, tracing its patterns is not easy. We are able to reconstruct the Corinthians' understanding of conversion only through Paul's words. Mirror-reading is unavoidable and essential, although undeniably hazardous.[3] Further, simply to identify a distinctively Corinthian position or attitude is not to account for it. The many varied and complex components of Graeco-Roman culture and social life cannot have influenced the Corinthians' understanding of their new faith in equal proportion. Identifying which factors are significant is a necessary preliminary to exploring them.

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[1]On the inevitability of indigenisation see Russell (1994) and Cusack (1998) who, in their studies of the conversion of Germanic peoples in the early middle ages, emphasise that alongside the Christianisation of these peoples there was also a Germanisation of Christianity.

[2]This is not to say that Paul and the Corinthians provide an extreme example. Paul was fluent in Greek, and Jews had formed a significant minority within Hellenistic society for centuries. The gap between the cultural resources operative on both sides of their encounter was far narrower than, for example, that between western missionaries and African peoples in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Nevertheless, despite his advocacy of a law-free gospel aimed at the creation of communities which cross ethical and cultural boundaries, Paul displays considerable antagonism towards Hellenistic culture. See Barclay (1996), chapter 13.

[3]For a discussion of these hazards, along with a defence of the propriety of mirror-reading, see Barclay (1987).

This introduction will therefore ask (i) what were the main contours of the Corinthians' understanding of their conversion and its consequences, and (ii) which elements of Graeco-Roman culture and social life significantly influenced this understanding? Yet before doing so, comment must be made upon the level at which such influence operates. Paul may be prepared to label the Corinthians as νηπίοι ἐν Χριστῷ (3:1), but he nowhere calls into question the genuine nature of their conversion. He appears confident that they are indeed in Christ. There is also little to suggest that Paul's teaching about Christ has been explicitly rejected. Even in response to a denial of the resurrection of the dead, Paul argues as if the raising of Christ is common ground (15:12). Paul and the Corinthians share a common set of religious symbols, and it is not in their choice of symbols that Paul finds fault with his converts. Instead, he is disturbed by the different manner in which the Corinthians construe the significance of these shared symbols. On the one hand, Paul frequently criticises the Corinthians' failure to draw from their faith ethical implications which to him seem obvious. Seven times he frames questions with the somewhat exasperated expression οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ...;[4] On the other, he finds overconfident the Corinthians' sense that their conversion has granted them an exalted spiritual status (4:8-10). It is in the significance granted to specifically Christian symbols, not their replacement with others, that factors in their Graeco-Roman environment influence the Corinthians.

Given this, structuration theory provides a particularly appropriate resource for the exploration of these influences. At the level of discursive consciousness, the primary influence upon the Corinthians is the Christian faith advocated to them by Paul. They have converted, and they have adopted a new set of religious symbols. Here transformation dominates. However, the Corinthians construe the significance of these symbols somewhat differently from Paul, and this suggests that, at the level of practical

[4] 1 Cor. 3:16, 6:2, 6:3, 6:9, 6:16, 6:19, 9:24. Paul also uses this expression in Romans, but less frequently. See Rom. 6:3, 6:16, 7:1.

consciousness, things are rather more complicated. It will be remembered that social practices simultaneously reproduce the largely implicit rules and resources (structures) of social life and lay them open to transformation (**1.4.2.2**). Both are possibilities and, if reproduction is the stronger, then the rules and resources which enabled and constrained familiar social practices before conversion will be applied to the new set of religious symbols. As it defines competent and appropriate behaviour in relation to any given social context, the Corinthians' practical consciousness will reflect the norms of Graeco-Roman society as well as those of Paul's gospel. For example, the rite of the Lord's Supper is one that expresses the profound transformation of the Corinthians' identity wrought by conversion. Yet, I will suggest, their implicit understanding of what constitutes appropriate conduct in that context is largely shaped by the assumptions of Graeco-Roman society as to appropriate conduct at communal meals (**8.3**). The Corinthians' practical consciousness has not been transformed to the degree necessary to render their conduct acceptable to Paul (11:17-34). Thus, it is at the level of practical consciousness that the influence upon the Corinthians of their Graeco-Roman environment can be traced.

7.2 Dominant Features of the Corinthians' Understanding of Conversion[5]

The difficulties involved in reconstructing the opinions of the Corinthians mean that detail is largely beyond us. The most we can speak of is a broad theological pattern into which Paul's criticisms seem to fit. In outlining this pattern I find myself entirely in agreement with John Barclay, whose reconstruction accounts for the available evidence in as economical a manner as possible.[6] In particular I would draw from his discussion the following three points:

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[5]Of course, there may have been more than one understanding of conversion current at Corinth. References to 'the Corinthians' throughout part 3 are not meant to deny this, but rather to refer to the dominant ethos against which Paul directs his criticisms. Even in 1:10-12 Paul does not criticise single groups in isolation, but addresses factionalism as a problem afflicting the whole church.

[6]See Barclay (1992), pp.61-65.

(i) The Corinthians consider their conversion to have given them access to knowledge (γνῶσις) and wisdom (σοφία).[7] "Paul does not clearly describe what content the Corinthians give to it; but we know that it concerns the understanding of mysteries (13:1-2) and it seems to include some conviction of the oneness of God and the insignificance (or non-existence) of εἴδωλα (8:4-6)."[8] This last two items are of considerable interest since Paul might be expected to applaud such monotheist sentiments, and yet this knowledge is subject to scathing attack (8:1-3). Here is one confirmation of my suggestion that Paul and the Corinthians share a common set of religious symbols, but construe their significance differently.

(ii) Perhaps most importantly of all, the Corinthians identified the source of their insight as the possession of the Spirit.[9] Received at conversion in baptism (12:13), and displayed by the dramatic exercise of its gifts during worship, it is the experience of the Spirit which convinces the Corinthians that they now enjoy an exalted religious status, set far above other inferior mortals. They are πνευματικοί, whereas those outside the church are ordinary ψυχικοί (2:6-16).

(iii) The Corinthians do not hold a 'realised' or 'over-realised' eschatology. From Paul's perspective "the freedom, knowledge and spiritual ecstasy enjoyed by the Corinthians constituted a falsely claimed pre-emption of eschatological glory (4:8-10)."[10] But the Corinthians simply do not share Paul's sense of an apocalyptic disjunction between present and future. Instead the strength of their emphasis on the present possession of the Spirit means that their perspective is non-eschatological. "Their Spirit-filled lives are not an early experience of the future; they simply consider

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[7]See 1:18 - 2:5; 3:18-23; 8:1-6; 13:1-12.
[8]Barclay (1992), p.61. See also Barrett (1971b), p.18; Fee (1987), pp.8-9; Horrell (1996), p.121.
[9]See also Fee (1987), pp.10-11
[10]Barclay (1992), p.64.

themselves to have reached the heights of human potential."[11] The Corinthians' denial of the resurrection of the dead (15:12), often taken as symptomatic of an 'over-realised' eschatology, is better explained not as a denial of immortality in general, but of bodily resurrection in particular.[12]

To these essentially theological characteristics, I would add the Corinthians' disposition towards factionalism. While interpretations which take the four 'parties' of 1:12 as the key to understanding the whole letter have rightly fallen out of fashion, there remains every reason to suppose that factions were a significant feature of the life of the Corinthian church. "When we add in further allusions to 'quarrels' (1:11), 'jealousy and quarrelling' (3:3), 'these arrogant people' (4:19), 'boasting' (5:6), 'grievances' and legal proceedings between members (6:1), 'factions' (11:19) and 'disorder' (14:33), it is hard to avoid the conclusion that the Corinthian church was riven with disagreement."[13] Particularly significant is the further mention of factions in 11:19. For, from the beginning of chapter 5 onwards, Paul deals with a range of specific issues, but does so without relating particular problems to particular groups. His criticisms are directed at all, and that factions should appear again in chapter 11 suggests that they existed within the dominant ethos outlined by Barclay. Perhaps, indeed, they were stimulated by it. If the Corinthians considered their conversion to have granted them an exalted status far above that of the inferior ψυχικοί, then efforts to demonstrate superiority amongst themselves might well follow. Certainly status seems a pressing concern.

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[11]ibid. Although he uses the label 'realised' eschatology, Fee (1987), p.12 seems to agree that this represents an assessment reached from Paul's perspective: "It is doubtful ...whether they also have a Jewish apocalyptic view of the End; rather, they have probably translated such a view into their framework of 'spirituality' ...they are now experiencing a kind of ultimate spirituality in which they live *above* the merely material existence of the present age." His italics.

[12]Here Barclay suggests that Paul's perspective on the Corinthian church has controlled our description of them. I will make a similar suggestion in relation to the proposal that the Corinthians were 'magical sacramentalists' (**Appendix 3**). It does not follow that because Paul perceives there to be great dangers inherent in participation in idol-feasts (10:14-22), the Corinthians also do so. The available evidence concerning their attitude can be more economically accounted for in other ways.

[13]Dunn (1995), p.27.

7.3 Influences upon the Corinthians' Understanding of Conversion

Having outlined the distinctive contours of the Corinthians' understanding of conversion and its consequences, we may now consider which aspects of Graeco-Roman religion and social life may have been significant in shaping it. I will suggest two significant influences, one that of voluntary associations, the other that of mystery cults. In relation to the former, I explore the hypothesis that on a range of issues - patronage, conduct at the Lord's Supper, court cases between believers, the Jerusalem collection - the differences between Paul and the Corinthians can be illuminated by analogy with the voluntary associations. This is not to suggest that in some sense the Corinthian church was a voluntary association, or that voluntary associations provide the only appropriate analogy to the Pauline churches within the Graeco-Roman environment.[14] Instead, I examine the possibility that, as they grapple with the task of defining what it means to belong to their new community, the Corinthians instinctively draw upon patterns of belonging familiar from the voluntary associations. At the level of practical consciousness, some of the rules and resources structuring the life of voluntary associations are applied to the church. In some areas, conversion does not alter the Corinthians' practical consciousness to the degree necessary for their conduct to please Paul.[15]

One form of voluntary association was that composed of initiates into mystery cults. With regard to the mystery cults, I first clarify important questions surrounding their nature which have long distorted the exploration of their significance

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[14]The others regularly proposed are the household, the synagogue and the philosophical school. For a general discussion of the virtues and limitations of each suggestion, see Meeks (1983), pp.75-84.

[15]This does not imply that every criticism Paul directs at the Corinthians can be attributed to what is, from his perspective, an insufficiently dramatic change. In some respects, their understanding of conversion is more dramatic than Paul thinks proper. We have already noted their extremely high assessment of their new spiritual state, and their apparent impulse to celibacy, even within marriage, is both unusual in their Graeco-Roman environment and something which Paul seeks to restrain and channel (7:1-7).

for early Christianity. In particular, the mystery cults did not shape the Christian belief that, in baptism, the believer dies and rises with Christ. Although the mystery cults may help to clarify much about the Corinthians' attitudes towards the sacraments, their influence did not tend in this direction. Even were it demonstrated that the Corinthians were 'magical sacramentalists,' the influence of the mystery cults could not account for such an attitude.[16] More positively, I examine the idea that it is the significance granted by the mystery cults to initiation which influences the Corinthians. Their attitude towards baptism displays similar patterns. This is not a proposal that the Corinthian church was, in effect, a mystery cult, or that the Corinthians turned baptism into a mystery initiation. Instead, I consider whether, in order to understand what happens at baptism, the Corinthians draw upon already familiar attitudes towards the significance of initiation. Can the Corinthians' sense that their conversion has resulted in a new exalted status, prompted by possession of the Spirit received at baptism, be illuminated by analogy with initiation? If so, then this forms another example of the application of the rules and resources structuring existing social practices to new Christian ones. Once again, it is at the level of practical consciousness that their Graeco-Roman environment exercises influence upon the Corinthians' understanding of their own conversion.

7.4 Compatible and Incompatible Alternative Proposals

In proposing to explore the influence upon the Corinthians of voluntary associations and mystery cults, I am not suggesting that they were the only factors in their Graeco-Roman environment which help to account for the Corinthians' understanding of their conversion and its consequences. It is entirely possible that, perhaps especially at the level of practical consciousness, different influences reinforced each other. To paint a rounded picture of the impact of their social and religious environment upon the Corinthians might require a substantial palette. For example, the

[16]In **Appendix 3** I argue that the Corinthians were not 'magical sacramentalists'.

suggestion that the Corinthians believe possession of the Spirit to grant them σοφία is compatible with an emphasis on the influence of the Graeco-Roman rhetorical tradition in shaping what they considered wisdom to be. The recent studies of Litfin and Pogoloff on that tradition are therefore, in these broad terms, compatible with my own.[17] Similarly, my decision to explore analogies between patronage within the voluntary associations and patronage within the Corinthian church cannot be divorced from the exercise of patronage in general. The functioning of patronage within both the voluntary associations and the Corinthian church is shaped by its broader context within Graeco-Roman society as a whole. The recent studies by John Chow and Andrew Clarke,[18] both of whom urge the importance of patronage practices for understanding the Corinthian church, are therefore also, in very broad terms, compatible with this one. Finally, the issue of patronage itself feeds into the wider one of social status, the theme which has dominated study of the Corinthian church since the publication of a series of articles by Gerd Theissen in the mid-1970s.[19] Here too, there is broad compatibility with my own argument, and in my discussions of 1 Cor. 1:10-17 (**9.3.1**) and 11:17-22 (**8.3.2**) I will argue that the factionalism of the Corinthian church is best explained in relation to social stratification. Theissen's portrait of the Corinthian church as composed largely of those of low social status, but with a few influential members who enjoyed a significantly higher social standing, continues to be convincing.

It does so despite the recent assault launched upon it by Justin Meggitt. In his *Paul, Poverty and Survival*, Meggitt argues that Paul and all his converts shared in the poverty experienced by 99% of the population of the Roman Empire.[20] They were part of the vast population who lived at or near subsistence level and whose lives were characterised by struggle for the basic means of survival such as food, shelter and

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[17]Litfin (1994), Pogoloff (1992).
[18]Chow (1992), Clarke (1993).
[19]See Theissen (ET 1982).
[20]Meggitt (1998a), p.75: "Neither the apostle nor any members of the congregations he addresses in his epistles escaped from the harsh existence that typified life in the Roman Empire for the non-elite."

clothing.[21] Whether this forms an accurate portrayal of economic conditions within the empire is itself a matter of some controversy,[22] but Meggitt's argument that *all* Pauline Christians endured such conditions founders upon the evidence of 1 Corinthians. He suggests that the οὐ πολλοί wise, powerful and well-born of 1:26 were "a small group of literate, *ingenui*, artisans - who amongst the urban poor would have appeared relatively more privileged but whose lives would still have been dominated by fears over subsistence."[23] While Meggitt does demonstrate that the term εὐγενής can apply to those not of noble birth, he offers no explanations of how such artisans might be described as wise and powerful and, more importantly, no instances of comparable combinations of terms applying to those struggling for subsistence. If anything, Meggitt's exegesis of 11:17-34 is even less convincing.[24] His book provides us with a timely reminder that not every issue in 1 Corinthians is to be explained with reference to social status,[25] and should cause us to reflect that the social profile of the Corinthian church may not be typical of others, but that is all. Social stratification was one significant factor in the life of the Corinthian congregation.[26]

The Graeco-Roman rhetorical tradition, patronage and social status are therefore all factors within the Corinthians environment whose influence upon them is compatible with my own proposals. They might interact with, and even reinforce, the

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[21]See Meggitt (1998a), p.5.

[22]Some of Meggitt's strongest arguments against Theissen *et al* seem to contradict this extremely bleak view of prevailing economic conditions. It may be true that one did not need to be a member of the elite to own a house, to own slaves, to travel, or to undertake litigation against a social equal, but are these really activities characteristic of those whose daily lives are dominated by a struggle for food, shelter and clothing?

[23]Meggitt (1998a), p.106.

[24]See below, p.222 n.79.

[25]Approached on this basis, minus the insistence that *every* Pauline Christian suffered abject poverty, Meggitt's work makes several valuable points. For example, on the interpretation of 1 Cor. 4:10 (pp.106-07), on food sacrificed to idols (pp.107-13), and on litigation between believers (pp.122-25), he convincingly argues that social status is not a key factor.

[26]This view in fact pre-dates Theissen considerably. See Weiss (ET 1937) Vol.I, p.293: "It (the Corinthian church) was quite predominantly composed of the dregs of the population, the lower elements of which were without culture and social importance; slaves and labourers were in the vast majority ...Members of the upper classes were not however entirely lacking." Weiss goes on to identify Chloe, Stephanas, Gaius, Crispus and Erastus as probable members of this minority.

influence exercised by voluntary associations and by the mystery cults. Other hypotheses which have figured prominently in Corinthian studies are incompatible with my proposals. One is that the Corinthians' Christianity was 'gnostic'.[27] Here there are broad problems with the concept of Gnosticism itself. One is that it is far from clear that Gnosticism or even proto-Gnosticism existed in the first century. Too many demonstrations of the vitality of Gnosis in the first century and of its availability to influence the New Testament are circular, since they are based on the New Testament documents themselves.[28] More likely is the suggestion that Paul's letters themselves shaped later Gnostic thought, since the Naassenes and the Valentinians revered Paul rather than repudiating him as an opponent.[29] A further problem is that those proposing the influence of Gnosticism upon the Corinthians have indiscriminately mixed their sources. In particular, the false assumption is often made that Gnosticism and the mystery cults are essentially the same phenomenon.[30] Although it is easy to see that Gnosticism, perhaps the syncretistic religious movement *par excellence*, owed something to the mystery cults,[31] the two were different, and Gnostic texts contain few specific references to them.[32] It is such difficulties which have even led to calls for the complete abandonment of the term 'Gnosticism' as "a word, a 'sick sign,' that has come to mean

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[27]Schmithals (1971) represents the high water mark for this hypothesis. Ironically, it was perhaps his presentation of Gnosticism as the key element in more or less every issue in Corinth which began to turn minds against it.

[28]See Rudolph (ET 1983a), pp.294-308 and (1983b), pp.26-32. Lohse (ET 1976), p.268 provides another example of this.

[29]See Pagels (1975), p.1.

[30]Reitzenstein (ET 1978), p.443 writes that "Paul is a gnostic." Bultmann (ET 1969) Vol.I, pp.70-72 & (ET 1952) Vol. I, pp.164-175 considers 1 Cor. 2:6-16. In the first piece he discerns the influence of the mystery cults, in the second that of Gnosticism. The German original of the former was written in the 1920s, that of the latter in the 1940s.

[31]Perhaps especially in organisation and secrecy. See Rudolph (ET 1983a), p.213-15. This fact is exploited by Yeo (1995), p.119 in order to argue that although the Corinthians' theology is shaped by proto-Gnosticism, the mystery cults in Corinth provided "environments conducive to ...acceptance of the proto-Gnostics' conception of freedom and right." Of course, whereas Yeo, pp.101-19 can demonstrate the presence of mystery cults in first century Corinth as a matter of archaeological and literary record, he cannot do so for 'proto-Gnostocism.' Once again, the mystery cults serve as a proxy for Gnosticism.

[32]See Wedderburn (1987b), p.122. Only the Naassenes are an exception. Of their Gnostic reinterpretation of the mysteries and of NeoPlatonist ones, Wedderburn writes, p.129, that "they would not necessarily have suggested themselves at all times to the devotees of the mysteries ...even when they were in fashion it is certainly not the case that all would have interpreted the mysteries in such ways."

too much, and therefore very little."[33] Added to these broad problems is the more specific one that the Corinthians' γνῶσις seems to have emphasised God's role as creator (8:4-6, 10:26), something which does not fit with the anti-cosmic dualism regarded by many as the most prominent feature of Gnosticism.[34] The Corinthians were not influenced by Gnosticism.

An alternative proposal is that Corinthian Christianity was strongly influenced by Hellenistic Judaism, in particular by the philosophy of Philo of Alexandria. Birger Pearson argues that the background to the Corinthians use of the πνευματικός - ψυχικός terminology, reflected in 1 Cor. 2:6-16 and 1 Cor. 15:44-54, is to be found in Philo's use of πνεῦμα and ψυχή in his exegesis of Genesis 2:7.[35] Pearson's argument was taken up and further developed by Richard Horsley, who sought to show that it was also capable of providing an explanation for wider features of Corinthian theology. Horsley argued that the link between Philo and the Corinthians is not so much their common language, but a shared anthropological dualism which pitted earthly against heavenly, mortal against the immortal, body against soul, blood against spirit.[36] Against this suggestion there are three main points to be made.[37] Firstly, Philo nowhere uses the specific terms which appear in 1 Corinthians. Horsley himself admits that "only the specific terminology, 'pneumatikos - psychikos' is missing."[38] Secondly, the proposal rests upon an extremely narrow exegetical base within 1 Corinthians itself, since it is only in 1 Cor. 15:44-54 that a case can be made for Paul's argument reflecting interest on the part of the Corinthians in the exegesis of Genesis. One might also doubt whether Paul's

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[33]Williams, M.A. (1996), p.5.
[34]See Rudolph (ET 1983a), p.60. See also Rudolph (1983b), p.29 and Williams, M.A. (1996), p.4. Nor is such anti-cosmic dualism a feature of the mystery cults. See Wedderburn (1987b), pp.121-25.
[35]For the core of his argument see Pearson (1973), chapters 2-4.
[36]Unlike Pearson, Horsley does not identify what Philo intends by the terms πνεῦμα and ψυχή with that intended by the Corinthians. Horsley instead suggests that, for Philo, these terms refer to higher and lower parts of the immortal soul, whereas, for the Corinthians, they denote opposite sides of a contrast between soul and body. Horsley nevertheless maintains that these are essentially similar contrasts. See Horsley (1976), pp.270-80.
[37]See also the criticisms offered by Barclay (1992), p.64 n.29.
[38]Horsley (1976), p.280.

argument here really reads as if he is countering a Philonic ontological distinction concerning the origins of two different kinds of humanity.[39] Finally, both Pearson and Horsley suggest that Philonic influence was transmitted to the Corinthian church through Apollos. It does not follow that because Apollos was an Alexandrian Jew he was an advocate of Philo's views, or even necessarily aware of them. We only know that he was an Alexandrian Jew from Acts 18:24-26, verses which also record that, on arrival at Corinth, Apollos knew only the baptism of John. This scarcely fits the image of him as an enthusiastic advocate concerning the things of the Spirit with strong opinions to impart.[40]

Thus, as with Gnosticism, the suggestion that the Corinthians were influenced by Alexandrian Jewish philosophy suffers from an inability to demonstrate that these influences were present in the local environment. In contrast, voluntary associations were so endemic throughout the Roman empire, and involved so many sections of society, that participation in them by at least some members of the Corinthian church is a reasonable inference (**8.1.2**). It can also be demonstrated from the archaeological record that the mystery cults enjoyed a significant presence in first century Corinth (**9.5**). Among the wide range of possible influences upon the Corinthians' understanding of conversion, and its consequences, they are worthy candidates for exploration.

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[39]Horsley (1976), p.277 argues that Paul's insistence in 15:46 that the natural must come before the spiritual is "a pointed transformation of his 'opponents' view of the priority." But, as Weddderburn (1973), p.302 suggests, "the Corinthians erred in holding to a one-stage soteriology, rather than in reversing the order of a two-stage one."

[40]Pearson (1973), p.18 n.23 suggests that Acts 18:24-26 is wrong in alleging that Apollos knew only the baptism of John. Pearson thus implies, without grounds on which to do so, that the information offered about Apollos is simultaneously reliable (he was an Alexandrian Jew) and totally false (he knew only the baptism of John).

8

Corinthian Conversion and Voluntary Associations

8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 Understanding Voluntary Associations

Voluntary associations were extremely widespread in the ancient world. "Where two neighbours at a corner pub today will raise their glasses and at most exchange a friendly 'Cheers!' the two in antiquity seem to have said, 'Be it resolved to call ourselves the society of...' "[1] Yet this very popularity and the great variety of forms which it spawned make voluntary associations difficult to define. The label itself is an etic one, and covers groups that were called *collegia* in Latin, and a whole host of names in Greek (θιασοί, κοινά, ὀργεῶνες, ἐρανοί, συνοδοί and others). It distinguishes them "from institutions such as the state, city, or family, where membership was automatic - a question of birth rather than choice,"[2] and also from "the official collegia and sacred sodalities run by the state."[3] This form of association is distinguished from others by the fact that, generally speaking, a decision to join was necessary. Further, many associations had statutes which were "in reality private contracts whose validity depended upon the voluntary, expressed consent of the members."[4]

Yet while this distinction between voluntary and automatic membership is broadly valid, it must not be pressed too hard.[5] This is clear from even the simplest classification of types of voluntary association. "We arrive at three groupings: those associated with a household, those formed around a common trade (and civic

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[1]MacMullen (1974), p.82.
[2]Wilson, S. (1996), p.1.
[3]ibid.
[4]Boak (1937), p.220. See also Nock et al (1936), p.43. *P.Mich. Tebt.* 243, 244 and 247 are association statutes in which all the members have appended their signatures or marks in order to indicate acceptance of the contents.
[5]Of course, no human decisions are independent of the constraints and opportunities presented by social structures. The term 'voluntary' is a relative one, and in relation to ancient associations it denotes a greater degree of individual choice when compared to other forms of social belonging in *that* society.

locale), and those formed around the cult of a deity."[6] In certain circumstances membership in a household association or a trade guild may have been difficult to avoid. The degree to which associations are 'voluntary' varies, and it is perhaps with the cult associations that it is at its greatest. Unlike household or trade associations, the *basis of association* was not any pre-existing social or economic connection amongst the members, but shared devotion to a particular deity.[7] One might be born into a household, or one might effectively be born into a trade, and therefore inherently likely to join a particular association, but one was not, by and large, born into a cult association. The bulk of the evidence cited in this chapter is drawn from such cult associations.[8]

The decision that we are justified, despite all the necessary qualifications, in applying the label 'voluntary' to these associations is supported by their social location. Associations characteristically occupy a social space between those institutions of which individuals automatically find themselves a part. There is widespread agreement that they existed neither in what can properly be called the public sphere, nor in the private domain, but instead acted as part of a bridge connecting the two. They are an instance of those collective activities which "are part of the *koina* which define a city without constituting its political requirements."[9] Arnaoutoglou speaks of "a vacuum in the social continuum"[10] which was filled by cult associations. Arguably, this role had become increasingly important during the Hellenistic era when the cities ceased to be the organising centres of religious life, and associations had enjoyed a

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[6]Kloppenborg (1993), p.26. Although it must be emphasised that individual associations often simultaneously belonged to more than one of these groupings, this threefold classification does at least provide us with a rough guide as to types of association.

[7]Household cult associations provide a partial exception here, and others offered preferential fee rates to children of existing members.

[8]In what follows I have largely ignored the cult association which is perhaps best known among New Testament scholars, namely that recorded in *SIG* 985, and discussed by Barton and Horsley (1981). I have done so because its ordinances do not seem to me to be those of an association, but instead purity requirements laid upon any who would enter the temple to which they refer. See Nock (1933), pp.216-17, and (1972) Vol.I, pp.65-66.

[9]Schmitt-Pantell (1990), p.208.

[10]Arnaoutoglou (unpublished), p.2.

corresponding surge in popularity.[11] We shall examine in turn how the associations related to either side of the vacuum which they filled, firstly to the public sphere, to the polis, and then to the private sphere, to the household and the family.

The associations were "a polis writ small,"[12] imitating the cities in that the titles given to their officials were the same as those given to civic ones,[13] and honours were given and received in the same way as at the civic level. The difference was often in the range of social status found amongst those giving and receiving, with the associations providing the opportunity of participation in such activities to many who would always have been excluded at the civic level. They became a somebody in their own smaller world, even though they never could be in the larger one and yet, significantly, that smaller world, as a totality, was given recognition by the larger one. "No one found their honorific decrees ...in the least ridiculous ...the arrogation of fancy titles raised no laugh."[14] It did not do so because often at the very pinnacle of the association hierarchy sat a genuinely rich patron. Thus, the associations were an effective force for social integration, for they "provided not only an effective means by which to structure social relationships within the mass of the urban poor, but ...also served the equally crucial function of mediating relationships between the enormous body of non-elite and the tiny aristocratic elite in the cities of the empire."[15]

If the associations reached towards the city by aping its honours and rewards, in what ways did they reach back towards the household and the family? Some argue that associations did rather more than simply reaching back towards the family and actually conceived of themselves as such. As Nock puts it, "The cult association is primarily a family. Its head is called *pater*, not merely by worshippers of Mithras, but

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[11]For an attempt to combat this view by arguing that associations had been equally important in earlier periods see Parker (1996), p.333f.
[12]Kloppenborg (1996a), p.26.
[13]Kloppenborg (1996a), p.26 gives several examples.
[14]MacMullen (1974), p.75. Also quoted in Pogoloff (1992), p.253.
[15]Kloppenborg (1993), p.27.

also by devotees of Cybele, the Syrian Belela, and the Theos Hypsistos in the Bosporus ...The cult association, then, is a family and feels itself such."[16] Yet others challenge this view. For while the use of familial language is common in the relevant Latin inscriptions, it is rare in the Greek ones.[17] Further, it is not always clear what precisely the Latin use of familial language implies. Meeks suggests that it is largely a question of honorifics for patrons rather than a genuine family structure. "This quite formal usage should warn us against assuming an intimate association everywhere that such terms appear."[18] Clearly much depends here on what is implied by the term 'family'. Meeks may be right that associations which employed familial language were not necessarily intimate, but not all families are cosy and intimate. Some are formal, and require members to know their place. A good example of this is provided by the Dionysiac household cult association which erected an inscription to its priestess Pompeia Agripinilla.[19] The basis of this association is clearly the *familia*, and yet all its members are formally assigned to ranks.

It is therefore difficult to know what precise significance to accord to either the presence or absence of familial language. We may not make the simple equation that where it is present cult associations resemble an intimate family, and where it is absent they do not. On the whole, the mixed nature of the evidence suits the

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[16]Nock (1924), p.105.

[17]Poland (1909), pp.54-55: "Vergebens hat man meist bisher diesen Titel sicher nachzuweisen gesucht ...Gerade in dem Fehlen dieser gemütlichen Bezeichnungen besteht eine der merkwürdigsten Verschiedenheiten vom römischen Brauch, der, wie er von Vater und Mutter spricht, so vor allem Brüder in den Kollegen sieht." As Poland and Nock note, there are Bosporan inscriptions in Greek honouring Theos Hypsistos which employ familial language. However, the identity and origin of Theos Hypsistos remain obscure and it is clear that his cult was moulded by non-Hellenic influences. See Ustinova (1991).

[18]Meeks (1983), p.87 n.73.

[19]For a discussion of this association, and of the inscription on which our knowledge of it is based, see McLean (1993), pp.240-45. He provides the most accessible edition of the text, which is not contained in any of the major collections. Fox (1986), p.85 uses this inscription to support an overly sharp distinction between Latin and Greek cult associations: "In the West, religious associations tended to assume the character of extended families and hence, like the Roman family, they sometimes included slaves and freedmen among their membership. In the Greek East slaves were rarely members beside free men; the sexes, too, were almost always segregated." But, while Agripinilla's association included slaves and its inscription comes from the Roman Campagna c.150 CE, the language used is Greek, the majority of names listed are Greek (323 out of 402), and she had established the association while resident at Mitylene on Lesbos, the ancestral home of the family.

characterisation of associations as occupying an ambiguous social space between the private domain and the public sphere. This point is neatly made by an example from an earlier era. The members of the Attic ὀργεῶνες were all male, but their sacrifices and festivals were attended by their families. Although their formal basis suggests something different, when these associations actually met they appeared as collections of inter-locking households.[20] Further, the rules of associations often establish obligations between members. Many associations make provision for burial,[21] others stipulate that a member provide the necessary cash, or its liquid equivalent, for the whole association to celebrate births, comings of age, honours etc.[22] Significant events in the life of a member's family were also made of account in the life of the association. Associations reflected the concerns of the family as well as those of the city.

8.1.2 Voluntary Associations and the Corinthian Church

We have little direct evidence of voluntary associations in Corinth, two fragmentary inscriptions providing our only references to them.[23] However, the condition of inscriptions from Corinth is generally so poor,[24] and evidence of the activity of voluntary associations in the ancient world so widespread, that we have no reason to suppose that Corinth was any different in this respect from other major cities of the time. That there were a a large number of more or less flourishing associations, and that some of the Corinthian Christians will have belonged to them, both seem reasonable assumptions. Of the different types of association, it is perhaps cult associations which

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[20]This feature of their life is sufficiently central for Ferguson (1944), p.115f. to specifically discuss the exception. The ὀργεῶνες of Dionysus stand out because their activities only involved men.

[21]This is so widespread that it has sometimes been assumed that the primary purpose of many associations was to provide for the funerals of members. Kloppenborg (1996a), p.21 disputes this: "during the first century, *collegia tenuiorum* did not exist as such, although, to be sure, many, perhaps most, associations took care of the burial of their members. It was only with Hadrian that the notion of a collegium established *solely* for the sake of burial entered the realm of Roman law."

[22] See *P.Mich. Tebt.* 243, *P.Lond.* 2710, *SIG.* 3.1109.

[23]Kent (1966), Nos. 62, 308. The first of these is in Latin, dates from c. 120 CE, and honours two leading members of an association of the Lares of the imperial house. The second is in Greek, and is probably a fragment of the statutes of a cult association. Its date is uncertain, but it is only in the reign of Hadrian that Greek inscriptions first appear in any number in the new Corinth.

[24]Kent (1966), p.17: "It is difficult to think of any other ancient site where the inscriptions are so cruelly mutilated or broken."

are the most relevant since here, as already noted, personal preference was a stronger consideration, relatively speaking, than with household or trade associations. Similarly, a decision was required to join the Corinthian church,[25] a community composed entirely of those who had decided to enter it.[26] Without implying that all or even most members of cult associations qualify as converts,[27] it may be that their 'voluntary' aspect makes these associations a particularly suitable comparative tool for probing questions related to conversion.[28] They 'fit' this task particularly well.

How might voluntary associations have influenced the Corinthian church? What is the nature of the comparison being made between them? Enthusiasts have sometimes claimed that the early churches in effect *were* voluntary associations. In relation to Corinth, such claims were convincingly dealt with long ago by J. Weiss.[29] He pointed out that there is no evidence for the existence at Corinth of a permanent common fund, and therefore no evidence that provisions for the common meal were purchased from such a fund; no evidence that the community possessed officers and, above all, no evidence of any statutes governing its existence and the conduct of its members. Given that these were all common features amongst voluntary associations, Weiss felt that their absence told decisively against the supposition of any *conscious* attempts to imitate forms and institutions. The Corinthian church *was not* a voluntary association. However, while considering that the Jewish Diaspora communities provided equally valid comparative material, Weiss left open the possibility of employing our knowledge of voluntary associations in another way.

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[25]This in no way implies that all such decisions were individual ones, or that allegiance to Christianity was unaffected by household or professional ties, cf. the household of Stephanas (1 Cor. 1:16, 16:15), and the tent-making connection between Priscilla and Aquila and Paul (Acts 18:3).

[26]To state the obvious, there can at this stage have been no adult members of the Corinthian community who had been born into the church. Anyone in that position would still have been a young child.

[27]See the understanding adopted on p.10.

[28]One could make a similar case on behalf of philosophical schools, but whereas very few people had experience of belonging to such a school, associations appear to have involved a substantial proportion of the population. There is a far greater probability of Corinthian converts having previously belonged to associations than to philosophical schools.

[29]See Weiss (1910), pp. xxii-xxv. His position is discussed by Kloppenborg (1993), pp.219-20.

> Ferner bedenken wir, daß doch gewiß viele Gemeindemitglieder früher solchen Vereinen angehört hatten, z.t. auch noch angehörten, wenigstens solchen mehr bürgerlichen Charakters - lag es nicht in der Natur der Dinge, daß sie in manchem einzelnen Tun, in manchem Brauch, in mancher praktischen Anordnung einfach handelten, wie es in jenen Sitte war, natürlich mehr *unbewußt*, aus der Notwendigkeit der Sache heraus?[30]

Thus, I am not arguing that the Corinthian church *was* a cult association. There are areas where the differences are so striking and overwhelming that any conscious general intention to imitate is simply implausible. Instead, I am suggesting, along with Weiss, that in some actions, customs and practical arrangements the Corinthians instinctively draw on patterns of behaviour familiar from the voluntary associations. As they grapple with the application of their new set of religious symbols to daily living in Graeco-Roman society, the Corinthians re-use elements from old patterns of religious belonging in order to construct a new one. There is a common sensibility, a common feel for what is an appropriate way to proceed when confronted with certain problems. But what Weiss identifies as unconscious imitation, I would regard as belonging to the realm of practical consciousness. Some of the rules and resources which structure the life of voluntary associations come also to structure aspects of the life of the Corinthian church. Further, and equally unsurprisingly, this practical consciousness does not always match that of Paul. In such cases is revealed the inevitable divergence between the ability of the convert to break free from familiar social structures and the desire of the advocate of conversion to replace them with new ones. It is in some of those areas where Paul is least happy with the Corinthians' behaviour that one can detect most clearly a practical consciousness similar to that which structured the life of voluntary associations.

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[30]Weiss (1910), p.xxiv. My italics.

This influence can take two forms. In one form, the social attitudes found in the Corinthian church and the voluntary associations seem close (e.g. in relation to litigation, the Jerusalem collection). Old practices are not given up, and new ones not taken on, despite the fact that Paul considers these steps to be desirable. The way in which the Corinthians behave reflects quite closely what we would expect to find among voluntary associations. The Corinthians' approach is so structured by their existing practical consciousness that their conversion has brought little change. In the other form of influence, conversion *has* brought changes in social practice. Here the social practices of the Corinthians and those of the voluntary associations seem quite different (e.g. in relation to patronage, the Lord's Supper). Yet, from Paul's perspective, the Corinthians' behaviour is also highly unsatisfactory in these areas. In such cases, it may be that the very differences in social practices are part of the problem. Paul is requiring different practices in equivalent areas of social life, but the Corinthians' practical consciousness has not been transformed to the necessary degree. A new, rather different, set of practices are, in part, structured by existing rules and resources,[31] and the result can be considerable confusion. In both forms of influence, the significant feature is continuity in practical consciousness. Assessed from Paul's perspective, there has been either little change or insufficient change.

Thus, the use of structuration theory enables material drawn from the voluntary associations to illuminate the life of the Corinthian church both where there are striking similarities in social practice and where there are differences. Voluntary associations become an *analogy* for the church. This is significant because while acknowledging that the churches were genuinely new and innovative social forms, and therefore not to be explained by simple identification with any prior institutions, an

[31]Here it is important to remember Giddens' central point that social structures are *both* reproduced and transformed in social practice. Degrees of reproduction and transformation vary. Thus, even although in these areas social practices have changed, and hence also practical consciousness, that change has not been of the magnitude required by Paul.

analogical approach also avoids the opposite trap of assuming them to be utterly original. It can deal with both differences and similarities. As Kloppenborg argues, "the point of analogical comparison is to identify similarity within difference in such a way that various aspects of the phenomena under consideration become intelligible."[32] Yet the actual attempts to pursue analogical comparison have not always lived up to this statement of intent.[33] By employing structuration theory in pursuit of an analogical approach, I hope to make a small contribution towards overcoming certain methodological problems which other proponents of analogy have tended to ignore.

Most discussions treat the early church as a whole and take early Christianity as a stable given factor upon which to base comparison. Yet both are doubtful assumptions. Although the variety of forms disguised behind the blanket descriptive term 'voluntary associations' is considerable, they did have a significant history behind them in Graeco-Roman society. Both insiders and outsiders knew what they were; is the same true of early Christianity?[34] At the date at which Paul wrote his letters, and it is Paul's letters from which evidence for comparison is most frequently drawn, was not Christianity still in the process of defining itself? Had it yet been determined which of the social forms available to it Christianity was most going to resemble? Might not the discussions and disagreements between Paul and his Corinthian converts offer us glimpses of this process of definition in progress? Further, might not their discussions and disagreements be significantly different from those between Paul and his converts in other places? Thus, when making comparisons with the Corinthian church, we need not be committed to voluntary associations as the only appropriate

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[32]Kloppenborg (1993), p.230.

[33]In relation to voluntary associations there often appears to be some confusion as to precisely what is being argued. Kloppenborg (1993), p.228 states that "not only did Christian organisations *appear* to be *collegia*; there is a strong likelihood that they thought of themselves as such." Yet in the same article he subsequently uses the language of analogy. Similarly, Wilcken (1984), p.44 seems to suggest that the early churches effectively were burial societies, but at (1971), p.280 he had stated, "I do not think that, strictly speaking, it (the Christian movement) was either a philosophical school or a burial association."

[34]Generalising about voluntary associations therefore also risks distortion, but it is perhaps not so great a hazard as with early Christianity, precisely because the guiding hand of precedence, much weaker in the latter case, could hardly fail to influence those founding new associations.

analogue for that community, nor to the view that the most appropriate analogue for that community will automatically be so for other Pauline communities.[35] Some may prove to share more in general with the early churches than others, and therefore to be generally superior vehicles for comparison,[36] but such conclusions should emerge from studies of individual communities, not provide their starting points.[37] A more detailed and more nuanced approach is required than has hitherto been typical.

8.2 The Role of Patronage

8.2.1 Patronage in the Voluntary Associations

There can be no doubting the vital significance of patronage in the life of the associations. As with patronage at the civic level, both sides benefited from the relationship; the association gaining materially, and the patron receiving honours in return. One of the most striking and interesting examples of this process which survives is found in the inscription known as the *Rule of the Iobacchoi*.[38] In April 176 C.E.[39] this Dionysiac group in Athens secured a new patron, and voted at a meeting to revive their statutes, a minute of the proceedings forming our inscription. The patron was one Claudius Herodes, who is perhaps to be identified with "the famous orator and

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[35]It would hardly be surprising, for example, if a community containing a high proportion of Jewish Christians and/or of former Jewish sympathisers resembled the synagogues rather more closely than one that did not. However, the complexity of such questions is illustrated by the fact that, from some perspectives, a synagogue might appear as a particular form of association. Richardson, P. (1996), p.104: "Early synagogues, both in the Diaspora and Palestine, were collegia."

[36]Meeks (1983), p.84 suggests that the Pythagorean and Epicurean schools resemble the Pauline communities "just to the extent that they take the form of modified households or voluntary associations."

[37]Nevertheless, the analogy of voluntary associations does raise a range of interesting questions about the early church in general. Can it help us to understand the formation and organisation of early Christian groups? Confronted by this new religious movement, would *collegium*/θίασος etc. have been familiar labels for which the average Greek or Roman, convert or outsider, might have reached in order to categorise it and comprehend it? In what ways and how closely did the old resemble the new?

[38]*SIG* 3.1109. For translations see Tod (1932), pp.86-91; Danker (1982), pp.156f.; Meyer (1987), pp.95-99.

[39]These events can be so precisely dated because the inscription states that the meeting took place on the eighth day of the month Elaphebolion in the archonship of Arrius Epaphroditus. We know from archon lists that Epaphroditus held that position in 175/76 CE. See Rotroff (1975), p.407.

philanthropist Herodes Atticus."[40] Whatever his precise identity, the members recognised that they had made an important catch. Claudius Herodes became their priest, the present incumbent Aurelius Nicomachus accepting demotion to the position of vice-priest after all of forty years' service. This was clearly unusual since it is remarked upon that he had given up his priesthood while still living, but he is described as doing so εἰς κόσμον καὶ δόξαν τοῦ Βακχείου (line 8). Further, when this arrangement and the reviving of the statutes were acclaimed by the members, one of them called out, νῦν εὐτυχεῖς, νῦν πάντων πρῶτοι τῶν Βακχείων (lines 27-28). All present clearly felt that the unusual demotion of Aurelius Nicomachus was justified by the honour and prestige which accrued to them collectively as a result of having Claudius Herodes as their new priest. By receiving him as patron, and by using the occasion to revive their statutes, they felt that they had put themselves head and shoulders above other Dionysiac associations. One suspects that Aurelius Nicomachus may have been the architect of the whole affair. "Associations thus resembled the whole social context they found themselves in and imitated it as best they could. Like everyone else they sought status."[41] One of the ways they secured it was by honouring the right patron.

The lengths to which this could be taken were considerable. On Delos in the second century BCE the *Posieidoniastai* of Berytos, an association of merchants, shippers and warehousemen honoured Marcus Minatius, a Roman banker.[42] In return for his benefactions he received the right to erect both his statue and his portrait on the association's premises, a seat of honour at all meetings, a special day in his honour once a year at the time of the feast of Poseidon, the proclamation of a gold crown on that day and at every monthly meeting and, finally, an ox to be led for him annually in the procession held on the festival of Apollo. There was no coyness about the function of such honours for the inscription reads, "let many become eager to seek honour for the

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[40]Danker (1982), p.161.
[41]MacMullen (1974), p.253.
[42]*ID* 1520. For a translation see McLean (1996), pp.197-200. At this date the island of Delos occupied a strategic position on international trade routes, and so attracted a cosmopolitan population.

synodos, knowing that it (the *synodos*) is useful, and not only votes fitting honours for benefactors, but also promotes (benefaction), which is most necessary so that the honours being given to benefactors may continue forever."[43] Honours are given as a reward for benefactions in order to encourage potential patrons, and further benefactions are needed in order to sustain the honours that have been voted to existing patrons. The system has its own inner, self-perpetuating logic which serves the same connected aims: the greater social prestige of the patron, and that of the association.

Clearly, the lubricant of this system was hard cash, or the wherewithal to provide material benefits in kind. Thus, while members of more humble social status might find what they would regard as a creditable place within the complex hierarchy of offices characteristic of the associations, the most prominent positions would be occupied by the rich.[44] The Agrippinilla Inscription provides a good example of this.[45] Dating from c.150 CE it honours Pompeia Agrippinilla, priestess of this association of Dionysiac initiates, and wife of M. Gavius Squilla Gallicanus, "one-time senator, consul and later proconsul of Asia Minor."[46] The inscription lists, according to internal rank, the 402 names of those members who had contributed to its erection. The association was primarily a household one,[47] with a substantial proportion of the membership comprised by the slaves of Agrippinilla and Gallicanus. B.H. McLean has established that 141 of the Greek names on the inscription are known to have belonged to slaves elsewhere. This does not prove that all of these 141 were slaves or that others named on the inscription could not have been slaves, but it does provide us with a rough guide to servile status. Those bearing slave names are concentrated in the lowest ranks of the association,[48]

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[43]McLean (1996), p.199.
[44]Meiggs (1973), pp.361-62 comments upon associations devoted to Cybele in Ostia that, "the patrons of these two guilds, and particularly of the *dendrophori*, included men of great distinction in the town ...but the officers and members of the guilds and the priests of the cult do not seem to have been men of great standing."
[45]For details see above, p.205 n.19.
[46]McLean (1993),p.239.
[47]Although some friends of the *familia* seem also to have been included. See McLean (1993), pp.254-55.
[48]McLean (1993), p.256. Confusingly, the numbers given by McLean in relation to each office total 163 not 141. No explanation is offered.

although McLean points out that the rest are spread throughout most of the other, higher offices, roughly in proportion to the total numbers occupying each rank.

Yet it is difficult to see how this justifies McLean's claim "that hierarchical distinctions were relativized."[49] An ex-consul, his family and social acquaintances were indeed participating in a religious association with their slaves and freedmen but the association itself, with its many ranks, is extremely hierarchical, and it is difficult to imagine that Agrippinilla and her immediate family did not determine the awarding of positions. To be sure, a favoured slave or freedman might be rewarded with a position within the association which all would recognise as a significant social advance for the individual concerned but, as with the manumission of slaves, rewards can serve to sustain a hierarchical system without relativizing it. The fact remains that it was Agrippinilla and her immediate family who were in control. She was priestess, her husband and possibly also his father were priests, of her brother and nephew (who are indistinguishable as they are both named Macrinus) one was a priest, and the other occupied the highest rank of *heros*, while her daughter Cornelia Cethegilla was appointed *dadouchos*, a rank second only to that of *heros*.[50] Finally, it was, after all, Agrippinilla who was honoured with an inscription.

Thus, our earlier claim that associations served to mediate relationships between the elite and the very much larger body of non-elite is justified.[51] They performed the delicate trick of asserting a connection between their wealthy patrons and their often somewhat humbler members while, simultaneously, reinforcing the gulf between them. The bulk of the members no doubt took pleasure in their collective connection with those in the elite, and on occasion obtained support for their group interests. Similarly, some individuals from amongst the non-elite achieved a prominence

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[49]ibid.
[50]McLean (1993), p.248.
[51]See p.204.

within an association which they could not have attained in society at large. However, the hierarchy remained. It was the rich who were the greatest benefactors and who therefore received the greater honour. Yet the existence of such a hierarchy does not mean that it was resented or that there is any reason to regard the gratitude expressed towards patrons in inscriptions as merely a matter of form. Even the humblest member of an association might enjoy the conviviality it provided and the privileges it brought. As Robin Lane Fox observes when commenting upon the admissions procedure set out in the *Rule of the Iobacchoi*, "The minor Iobacchus, ...had his Iobacchic vote and once a month he could exclude the people he hated most from the company which he most enjoyed."[52] Those on the inside of a club, whatever their rank, could feel themselves superior to those excluded, particularly if they knew it to be a good club.[53]

8.2.2 Patronage and the Corinthian Church

How does the pattern of patronage we have discerned in the associations compare to the practices and attitudes which we find in the Corinthian church? The most striking and obvious difference is the absence of office-bearers at Corinth. Despite rather clear evidence that the minority in the Corinthian church who enjoyed higher social status than the rest rendered services to Paul and to the rest of the church,[54] and despite the existence of substantial recent studies on the impact upon the Corinthian church of contemporary patronage practices,[55] there appears to have been no identifiable mechanism within the church by which such benefactions could be honoured. Indeed, status seems to have been sought and obtained by the display of the gifts of the Spirit, although the course of Paul's argument in 1 Cor. 12-14 suggests that there is a

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[52]Fox (1986), p.88.

[53]Note that this sense of superiority, based on success in competition for honour, is quite different from Paul's sense of separation from outsiders, which is based on the fear of moral pollution and of a dilution of his gospel's alternative ideology.

[54]See Theissen (ET 1982), pp.87-91 and Meggitt (1998a), pp.128-35. Although I agree with Meggitt that services rendered to the church, and/or any of the other indicators of personal status employed by Theissen, do not necessarily indicate elite status, they do, particularly when several apply to a single individual, suggest something other than a struggle for subsistence. See above, p.198 n.22.

[55]Chow (1992), Clarke (1993).

connection between the respect for tongues prevalent in the Corinthian church and more general ideas about social status.[56] Those most able to provide material benefactions may have tended to be those best equipped to demonstrate themselves spiritual. Nevertheless, a question remains to be answered. Does the absence of offices within the church indicate that those who provided services to it, and to Paul, were expected to do so without receiving any recognition or honour?

The factionalism of the Corinthian church, clearly instanced in Paul's condemnation of four 'parties' in 1:12, suggests otherwise, as the rivalry between these groups is best explained as a struggle for ascendancy between their local leaders.[57] Since Munck, in a piece of rhetorical exaggeration, entitled a chapter on Corinth 'The Church Without Factions,'[58] it has been widely accepted that the slogans of 1:12 are not the key to the complete understanding of the situation at Corinth. In particular, there is no evidence available from anywhere in the Corinthian letters as to the doctrinal position of the 'parties.' From the beginning of 1 Cor. 5 onwards Paul seems always to be addressing the church as a whole. However, others have pointed out that the existence of 'parties' does not necessarily imply doctrinal dispute; people can quarrel over other things also.[59] Welborn wishes to discern the background to 1 Cor. 1-4 in ancient politics,[60] and he argues that political groupings in Graeco-Roman society were essentially personal rather than ideological. Parties or groups were networks of personal allegiances, which were

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[56]See Martin (1991), pp.563-69 and (1995), chapter 4.

[57]For more detail on the slogans themselves, and for the connection between them and baptism implied by the argument of 1:13-17, see **9.3.1**. The suggestion that the 'parties' had local leaders best explains the link Paul implies between 'party' membership and who baptised whom. Of the four figures named at 1:12 only Paul and Apollos had certainly been to Corinth, and Paul had baptised so few that if the actual 'party' leaders are those named then it becomes difficult to account for the connection with baptism.

[58]Munck (1959), chapter 5.

[59]Clarke (1993), p.95: "The distinctions between the parties are not the theological distinctions between Hellenistic and Jewish Christianity, but rather the personality distinctions based upon reputation in secular terms." See also Horrell (1996), pp.112-17; Litfin (1994), pp.181-85; Mitchell, M. (1992), pp.71-72.

[60]Welborn (1987), pp.85-90 analyses Paul's language, demonstrating that the same terms are used as those employed by ancient historians to describe political conflict in a city. Mitchell, M. (1992), pp.71-80 provides extensive parallels in support of the same conclusion.

always known by the name of their leader,[61] and social inequalities helped to sustain this situation. "The bondage of the poor to the rich is the breeding ground of faction. Poverty creates dependence, a relationship that ambitious aristocrats readily exploit in their struggle for power."[62] Something similar has happened in the Corinthian church, with its handful of relatively wealthy members, and its majority of poor ones (1:26). The wealthier minority struggle amongst themselves for control and influence, but as they do so they draw groups of social inferiors into allegiance to them.[63] The 'party' mascots of 1:12 are just that, mascots, and "the real party leaders are thus local Christians who seek to legitimate their power by appealing to renowned figures in the church."[64] They receive recognition and honour from those within their own group.

Another passage which sheds some light on this question is 1 Cor. 16:15-18. Here Paul unreservedly commends the household of Stephanas who εἰς διακονίαν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἔταξαν ἑαυτούς (16:15). At first glance our attention not unnaturally falls on Stephanas himself.[65] It was, after all, his household, and if all its members engaged in certain activities as a unit, then it is natural to suppose that he was the instigator. All the information we have about him indicates Stephanas to have been one of the relatively wealthy minority in the church.[66] In commending him, Paul seems to be extending the sort of recognition a wealthy patron might receive within an association, albeit offered without the public display of statues, inscriptions, proclamations, gold crowns etc. Yet Paul's grammar remains plural throughout. He really does seem to mean to commend the whole household for their actions, and not merely by virtue of their association with Stephanas. The other Corinthians are urged to

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[61]Welborn (1987), pp.90-93. Mitchell, M. (1992), pp.83-86 agrees, but doubts that the slogans of 1:12 reproduce the precise form of political slogans.
[62]Welborn (1987), p.99.
[63]Theissen (ET 1982), p.138: "It is just such Christians of higher social status who bring with them a larger household unit. It is just such Christians who have been influential."
[64]Welborn (1987), p.98 n.64.
[65]McCready (1996), p.62 fails to see beyond this, and simply includes the attitude towards patronage displayed here in a list of similarities between the churches and the associations.
[66]Theissen (ET 1982), pp.94-95. Stephanas has a house, renders services to the church, and travels.

ὑποτάσσησθε τοῖς τοιούτοις (16:16), and when they are told, ἐπιγινώσκετε οὖν τοὺς τοιούτους (16:18), Fortunatus and Achaicus are included along with Stephanas. "Fortunatus is a common Latin name meaning 'blessed' or 'lucky'; it appears to have been common especially among slaves and freedmen ...Achaicus means 'one who is from Achaea.' This name, too, appears to be the kind that is given to slaves, or taken sometimes by freedmen."[67] It is therefore possible, although not provable, that these two men were the slaves of Stephanas.

If this is correct, then one wonders how Stephanas might have felt at being offered equal recognition with his slaves. Even if it is not, Paul's plural grammar implies the same point. The members of the church are to make themselves as subject to the other members of the household as they are to Stephanas himself. He may be able to do most by virtue of his greater resources, and even thereby to facilitate the service of the other members of his household, but Paul makes no quantitative measure of the services provided. What he praises is the fixity of purpose displayed by them all.[68] Thus, Paul is prepared to honour those who make provision for the needs of the church, and he is prepared to do so in a manner which implies the existence of some sort of hierarchy, for those commended are to be *submitted* to by others. However, in Paul's view there is no necessary correlation between one's position in the hierarchy of society and one's position in the hierarchy of the church, between the material scale on which one is able to make provision, and the degree of honour which one is to be accorded. The same respect is to be shown παντὶ τῷ συνεργοῦντι καὶ κοπιῶντι (16:16). What determines

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[67]Fee (1987),p.831. Theissen (ET 1982), p.92 finds it difficult to conceive of Paul urging the Corinthians to be subject to slaves, and so suggests that Fortunatus and Achaicus were members of Stephanas' family. Given the nature of their names this is surely the least likely possibility. That they were his freedmen (and perhaps therefore upwardly mobile) or simply not connected to Stephanas' household are better counters to our hypothesis that they were his slaves.

[68]The verb in 1:15 is τάσσω, which means 'place, assign, appoint.' The AV strikingly renders it, 'they have *addicted* themselves to the ministry of the saints.'

status in the church is the service of the saints, something which Paul's language in 16:15-18 has suggested is open to all.[69]

The existence of the factions suggested by 1:12 indicates that such ideas may not have been ones which the Corinthians readily assimilated. Caught up in a competition for honour and status among local leaders, they may have been much more inclined to measure the service of the saints quantitatively. If so, then the practical consciousness which structures their attitudes towards benefaction is very different from Paul's and, in certain respects, much closer to that found in the associations, where the material scale of what was provided and the honours voted in return were closely related. Paul's approach eschews such specific rewards, and the recognition and submission which he wants the church to extend to those who have served it seems to take the form of a general attitude of respect. It is much more intangible than a statue or a seat of honour, and therefore of far less utility as a means by which to display status. It probably also implies much more in the way of personal contact between those commended and those they served. It is possible to imagine, for example, that both a patron and an association could have obtained what they wanted from their relationship without any more than his or her occasional attendance at their gatherings;[70] but it is impossible to imagine something similar in the church. Even if not all the Corinthian Christians knew Stephanas well personally, they must have been able to observe and assess his conduct, and that of his household, at their regular meetings for worship. The pattern we find in the church is thus more open, more personal, and less ostentatious than that typical in the associations.

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[69]See Smith (1981), p.330. Smith notes clearly Paul's acceptance of status distinctions within the church, coupled with an insistence that status be determined by a different set of values from those current in society.

[70]The point being made here is about the minimum necessary for both sides to have their requirements fulfilled, not about what actually happened in all or even most cases. For instance, Claudius Herodes is appointed priest by the Iobacchoi (see above, pp.211-12) and as such has a role to perform in their regular worship (line 111f.).

As such it is more appealing to modern sensibilities, yet it may have had some weaknesses in its contemporary cultural context. By tying the degree of honour accorded to patrons to the scale of their benefactions, the pattern of patronage in the associations at least serves to regulate the pursuit of status and honour amongst their members. There is much more of a clear pecking order. People do indeed know their place, and the place of others. Yet was this so in the church? Fee, for one, has his doubts as to whether all at Corinth shared Paul's high regard for Stephanas.[71] The Corinthians may not have allocated everyone to ranks, or rewarded those who benefited the community with displays of honour, but does that mean that conversion had eradicated from amongst them the social impulse which gave rise to these practices amongst the associations? Although the Corinthians' social practices are here rather different from those found in the associations, the practical consciousness which structures the competition for honour and status among their leaders and supporters displays strong similarities. May not the absence of these familiar mechanisms of reward simply have produced a competition for honour which was no less intense, but which was a great deal less clearly channelled and regulated? One obvious forum for such competition is the common meal of the community.

8.3 The Common Meal

8.3.1 Common Meals in the Voluntary Associations

The statutes of associations display a strong concern with the regulation of conduct at common meals, a ubiquitous and central feature of their existence. As always with rules, it is difficult to tell whether they exist because poor conduct was an actual and frequent problem, or whether their existence was a sufficient

[71]Fee (1987), p.832. The injunction of v.18 has the odd effect "of being a 'letter of commendation' for the very ones who came to Paul from the church in the first place." If Paul regards them so highly then presumably the tensions between him and some in the church are also tensions between these latter and Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus.

sanction to deter such conduct. Whichever was the case, there remains much to be gained from an examination of exactly what was outlawed. Dennis E. Smith has drawn up a summary of typical rules, which unsurprisingly includes injunctions against quarrelling and fighting, and also against speaking out of turn or without permission.[72] Amongst the Iobacchoi, offenders were liable to be physically removed from the meeting by Bacchic bouncers appointed by the priests, οἱ ἵπποι (lines 140f.). The potential causes of such incidents are also clear. In Egypt in the first century BCE the Guild of Zeus Hypsistos[73] forbade its members to form factions (σχίματα, line 13),[74] and it also prohibited members from entering into one another's pedigree (γενεαλογήσειν, line 15) at table, a hint of the sort of thing that might have formed the content of the abusive and insulting language forbidden in the meetings of the Iobacchoi (line 74f.).[75] Further, the rules of some associations display sensitivity over seating arrangements at meals. It is a breach of the rules to attempt to occupy the place of another amongst the Iobacchoi (line 70), in the funerary society of Diana and Antinous (lines 2.25-28),[76] and in an unidentified association at Tebtunis in Egypt (line 7).[77] Smith argues these rules suggest "that some kind of ranking system of the places at table was in effect, thus explaining why such movement would take place and why it would cause a disturbance."[78] Common meals do indeed seem to have been occasions when association members were strongly aware both of their own proper status and of that of others, and the rules seek to prevent the disharmony that could arise should competition for honour become too intense.

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[72]Smith (1981), p.323.
[73]*P.Lond.* 2710. See Nock, Roberts and Skeat (1936) for the text and translation of this papyrus together with a commentary.
[74]Nock et al. (1936), p.51 take this to be a misspelling of σχίσματα.
[75]Although Nock et al. (1936), p.53, having speculated that the guild belonged to Philadelphia, suggest that the mixed racial conditions of such a Fayum town may have rendered the question of genealogy particularly sensitive.
[76]*CIL* XIV. 2112. This is an Italian funerary society of the second century CE.
[77]*P.Mich. Tebt.* 243. The identity of the association is unknown since the opening lines of the text are lost. The rule dates from the reign of Tiberius.
[78]Smith (1981), p.324.

8.3.2 The Lord's Supper in 1 Cor. 11:17-22

8.3.2.1 A Neglected Problem of Interpretation

Was competition for honour also a factor in the difficulties surrounding the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Corinth? Paul certainly found much cause for dissatisfaction in the way in which the Corinthians organised these occasions, and yet recent exegesis of the relevant passage, 1 Cor. 11:17-22, has paid little attention to competition for honour as a possible cause of the problems. The content of vv. 18-19, which speak of σχίσματα and αἱρέσεις, seems positively to invite comparison with the rules of associations, but scholarly attention has instead focused on vv. 20-22 where Paul offers more detailed criticisms. These have been convincingly interpreted by Theissen as indicating different treatment at the meal for the rich and the poor.[79] Different amounts of food and drink are being consumed by different people, and this may be either because the type and quantity of food served to individuals was determined by their social status, an apparently common dining practice at the time, and/or because some came later than others and missed most of the meal. In this latter case, it would be those members with least free time and least control over their own timetables, especially poorer members and slaves, who arrived last.[80] The difficulty is that while this reconstruction is genuinely convincing in relation to vv. 20-22, it is not obvious that it

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[79]Theissen (ET 1982), pp.145-174. This is denied by Meggitt (1998a), pp.118-22, pp.189-93 who attacks the assumption that 1 Cor. 11:17-34 refers to a eucharist accompanied by a common meal. He instead suggests that Paul's criticisms are directed at those who treat the elements as though they are the constituents of a normal meal and gorge themselves on the bread and wine, so denying others the opportunity to participate in the rite. The crucial phrase τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας (11:22) does not mean 'the have nots' in a general sense, i.e., the poor, but refers specifically to those who do not have the elements. There are enormous difficulties here. It is not clear how anyone could treat the *single* loaf and *single* cup presupposed by Meggitt as a normal common meal, for the unusual presentation of the food would itself signal that this was a very different occasion. The verb πεινάω is taken literally in 11:34, but metaphorically in 11:22. Those who gorge themselves on the elements do so out of physical hunger and should eat at home beforehand so as to avoid this temptation, but those excluded hunger simply to participate in the rite. One senses that the metaphorical sense ascribed to the verb in 11:22 is simply special pleading to avoid the granting of a literal sense to the verb μεθύω for, of course, a single cup of wine cannot cause actual drunkenness. Even if Meggitt is right that in most uses of οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες the substantive participle has a specified object then the most likely candidate in 11:22b is not the elements, but the houses (11:22a) which those whose behaviour offends Paul have (ἔχω). Thus, even if 11:22 does not necessarily imply a general contrast between rich and poor, it does imply a status distinction based on home ownership. On the question of the size and style of these houses see below, p.225 n.91.

[80]See Horrell (1995a), pp.197-98 for an excellent short summary of Theissen's position.

makes best sense of vv. 18-19. Theissen connects the two by interpreting the σχίσματα and the αἱρεσεις in the light of what follows. "The plural form σχίσματα, however, leaves open the question of how many groups are involved in the contention surrounding the Lord's Supper. It is only from 1 Cor. 11:22 that we learn that there are two groups opposed to one another, those who have no food, the μὴ ἔχοντες, and those who can avail themselves of their own meal, ἴδιον δεῖπνον."[81] Yet this limiting of the divisions and sects to two groups sits uneasily with Paul's puzzling remark in v.19 that there must be factions amongst the Corinthians in order to disclose which of them are genuine (οἱ δόκιμοι). Theissen's straightforward division between the rich and the poor assigns to the poor an essentially passive role, and to the rich an unworthy one. Thus, from Paul's perspective, the rich have been discredited, but which group have been revealed (φανερόω) by their actions as genuine?

This difficulty in reconciling the interpretation of vv. 18-19 with that of v.20f. is not a new one. Calvin wrote of v.18 that the terms used there "are not suitable and apposite for describing that disorder (i.e., of v.20f.)."[82] In the nineteenth century, Godet proposed on grammatical grounds that the problems of vv. 18-19 were different from those of vv.20-22.[83] The only scholars who have attempted to address this problem recently are those who want to use the meals of the associations to aid our understanding of vv. 18-19. Taking as their starting point the evidence of competition for honour at the common meals of voluntary associations, Smith and Pogoloff argue that Theissen is wrong to see the basic problem revealed in 11:17-34 as the treatment of the poor by the rich. Instead, it is competition between individuals which concerns Paul. In support of this position, Smith suggests that those referred to as τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας (v.22) are not

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[81]Theissen (ET 1982), pp.147-48.
[82]Calvin (ET 1960), p.237.
[83]Godet (ET 1886), pp.136-38. Paul's πρῶτον μὲν in v.18 sets up the expectation of a 'then again' which never appears. Godet takes it to be implied by the οὖν of v.20, but other commentators take it to refer to the contents of chapters 12-14. See Barrett (1971b), p.260; Héring (1962), p.112.

literally poor.[84] The phrase reflects not social reality, but the fact that conflict between rich and poor at a meal was a literary *topos* in the Graeco-Roman world. Smith is supported by Pogoloff, who argues that v.22 could refer to upper class persons down on their luck.[85] The problems have arisen "not among the highest or lowest levels of society, but among those with social pretensions who were most concerned with gaining a greater share of honour and most sensitive to insults which brought shame."[86]

Unfortunately, such arguments are unconvincing. While it is possible that the 'rich' of the Corinthian church consisted predominantly of those aspiring to the highest social status rather than actually possessing it, the poverty of the majority is strongly suggested by 1:26f. Further, τοὺς μὴ ἔχοντας and ὃς πεινᾷ (11:21) seem stubbornly concrete descriptions of the condition of this majority at the meal.[87] Smith and Pogoloff have simply reversed Theissen's strategy of allowing the interpretation of 11:22 to determine the interpretation of 11:18&19. There is a need for an interpretation of vv.18&19 which does justice to their own content, and which takes account of the analogy with competition for honour at the meals of associations. However, this interpretation must cohere with, not contradict, the solid exegetical conclusions reached by Theissen in relation to vv.20-22.

8.3.2.2 Competition for Honour at the Lord's Supper

In fact, this problem is a specific instance of a larger difficulty affecting the interpretation of 1 Corinthians as a whole. In 1:12 Paul mentions four σχίσματα, but in the various problems and questions which he addresses from the beginning of

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[84]Smith (1981), p.328: "That is not to say that meal customs did not provide for rigid distinctions among the guests according to their status. But those levels of status could all be within the same basic economic and cultural level, and often were."

[85]Pogoloff (1992), pp.254-55. That Smith and Pogoloff should, with an intent entirely at odds with his, join Meggitt in attempting to relativise the significance of the phrase οἱ μὴ ἔχοντες illustrates the oddity of the latter's position. In order to maintain that every single one of Paul's converts were poor, Meggitt rejects a piece of evidence which supports the contention that the vast majority of them were.

[86]ibid.

[87]See above, p.222 n.79 for my critique of Meggitt's attempts to suggest otherwise.

chapter 5 onwards he always seems to suggest at the most two positions.[88] While Theissen may argue convincingly for the priority of the second of these facts, and explain the two 'sides' as basically composed of the rich and the poor,[89] there is still a need to explain the presence of the σχίσματα. I believe that they are simply another facet of a situation where social status is a significant factor in the life of the church. The richer members of the Corinthian church do indeed regard themselves as superior to those who are poor, but competition between richer and poorer as social groups is not the primary cause of the difficulties discussed in 11:17-22. The main problem is rather that those of higher social status compete amongst themselves for honour and influence. The Lord's Supper is one of the arenas in which they do so, hence the divisions described in 11:18-19. Yet the effects of this competition amongst an elite are what Paul describes in vv.20-22. As the elite focus on the distribution of honour amongst themselves, the poorer members of the church are neglected. 11:20-22 describe not the problem but its symptoms; not a competition between richer and poorer, but the consequences of a competition for honour between the richer members.[90] It is at this point that the archaeological evidence to which Murphy-O'Connor draws our attention is of value, since if he is right that a small prestigious group dined in the *triclinium*, while the majority were outside in the *atrium*, then those with nothing may not even have been visible to those with plenty.[91] While some worried about the status implications of the place they were allocated inside the *triclinium*, others outside went hungry. Compatible with this reconstruction is Stephen Barton's view that the divisions here "are between

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[88]See above, p.192 n.5.

[89]Theissen (ET 1982), p.138 does nuance this position. He notes that "it is just such Christians of higher social status who bring with them a larger household unit. It is just such Christians who have been influential."

[90] I thus agree with Theissen that social status is of great significance here, but understand that significance in a rather different way.

[91]Murphy-O'Connor (1983), pp.153-61. This presupposes a large villa-type house. Meggitt (1998a), pp.120-22 is right to caution against the assumption that, in the first century, numbers would always have necessitated such large accommodation. As Meggitt notes, for example, Acts 20:9-12 seems to indicate a tenement flat. However, Acts 18:8-10 implies that the Corinthian church was unusually large. See Weiss (ET 1937) Vol.I, p.293. In Rom. 16:23, Paul finds it noteworthy that Gaius was host both to himself and to ὅλης τῆς ἐκκλησίας. See Horrell (1996), p.96. The assumption of a large house is therefore defensible in relation to the Corinthian church even if not in relation to others.

households or groups of households, with the pace set by the rich household heads competing for dominance."[92] For Paul, οἱ δόκιμοι are those who are able to step back from such competition and look beyond their status concerns to recognise the needs of the whole church. They eat the Lord's Supper διακρίνων τὸ σῶμα (11:29). Perhaps the commended Stephanas (16:15-18) was regarded by Paul as one such.

Thus, one can plausibly interpret the problems surrounding the celebration of the Lord's Supper at Corinth in a way which both accepts the thrust of Theissen's work on the subject, and yet which leaves room for a competition for status similar to that governed by the rules of associations. The σχίσματα[93] and αἱρέσεις which were unacceptable to Paul at the Lord's Supper were also unacceptable at the meals of associations. Yet it is noticeable that Paul's response is not to provide a set of regulations by which to control the competition for status signalled by the existence of such divisions and factions. Instead he demands its abandonment by asserting the priority and unity of the whole church. What ought to be the focus of concern is that the practice of the Lord's Supper at Corinth should reflect one of its primary spiritual effects, i.e., that those who eat of the one loaf are one body (10:17). As we have already seen implied in our discussion of 16:15-18, Paul believes that it is, paradoxically, those who are least concerned with their own position and most concerned with serving all who ought to be accorded the greatest honour by the community.

That this is a high-risk strategy on Paul's part is confirmed by the very existence of the problems which he has to confront. While the members of associations may have been carefully graded according to status, and while officers of an association might receive preferential treatment in the distribution of food,[94] it is difficult to imagine

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[92]Barton (1986), p.238.

[93]Of course it is the forming of σχίσματα that is expressly forbidden in the guild of Zeus Hypsistos (*P.Lond.* 2710). See above, p.221.

[94]See statutes of the society of Diana and Antinous (*CIL* XIV. 2112), lines 2.18-25. Quoted by Pogoloff (1992), pp.251-52.

that at their meals there could have been members who would have received so little as to remain hungry (11:21). One of the purposes of their rules was to ensure that those worthy of honour received it without this bringing shame and dishonour to others. It may have been necessary to know your place, and to display deference to those who enjoyed a higher rank than your own, but the member of an association was included by virtue of being a member. The payment of a membership fee brought certain entitlements.[95] Paul's angry words in 11:22 suggest that in the church at Corinth the poor were in danger of being effectively denied even this privilege of belonging. By asking for a rather more radical social adjustment from his richer converts than would have been expected of them in an association, Paul ran the risk of receiving rather less. Far from being eliminated at the common meals of the community, competition for status and honour were proceeding unrestrained. A new social practice, i.e., the Lord's Supper, was partly shaped by the practical consciousness relevant to an equivalent older one, i.e., the common meals of associations. The absence, at the level of discursive consciousness, of a formal set of statutes granted full force to the implicit rules and resources which prompted competition for honour and status at such occasions.[96] At least at this stage in the life of the Corinthian community, Paul's desire to abolish such competition was actually granting it free rein. By comparison, the attempts of the associations to regulate and channel such competition through their statutes are likely to have been rather more successful.[97]

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[95]Danker (1982), p.156 observes that "there is no evidence that any Christian group had a schedule of initiation fees or regular dues, with fines for non-payment. Indeed, it may rather be assumed that Christian views of God as the supreme Benefactor, who grants salvation without fee and sets into motion the generosity of his benefactors, would preclude such carefully defined procedure."

[96]Theissen (ET 1982), pp.154-55: "In distinction from other kinds of associations in antiquity, there were in this case apparently no formal regulations, no bylaws or procedures by means of which conflicts could be avoided ...When, by contrast, everything is left to the free sway of the 'Spirit', those who are of privileged status are much more likely to have things their way."

[97]Paul does imply that he has given the Corinthians' instructions as to how worship is to be conducted (11:2,17). Yet one doubts that they contained such advice as not getting drunk or making sure that all had something to eat! The rhetorical question τί εἴπω ὑμῖν; (11:22) suggests that, for Paul, such conduct was self-evidently unpraiseworthy, and that avoiding it is therefore unlikely to have been the subject of an explicit command. But what was self-evident to Paul may not have been so to many of the Corinthians.

8.4 The Courts

8.4.1 The Courts and the Voluntary Associations

One of the parallels most frequently drawn between early Christianity and the associations is in their attitude towards members pursuing court cases against one another. It is often argued or implied that Paul's prohibition, in 1 Cor. 6:1-8, of litigation between believers is essentially similar in scope and motivation to the provisions concerning litigation between members contained in many association statutes. Danker notes the occurrence of such a prohibition in the Rule of the Iobacchoi (line 94), directly referring his readers to 1 Cor. 6.[98] In addition to the Iobacchoi, Smith cites the Egyptian guild of Zeus Hypsistos (line 17) and invites his readers to compare this with 1 Cor. 6:1-8.[99] Similarly, Kloppenborg cites a string of other association rules from Ptolemaic and early Roman Egypt.[100] But is this comparison a valid one? Is the motivation and scope of Paul's prohibition of recourse to the courts the same as that found in the association statutes? What do the answers to these questions imply about the Corinthians' own approach? In order to have a sound basis on which to pursue these issues we must first examine the relevant provisions in association statutes.

The motive for these provisions is clear. As Kloppenborg puts it, "the context of these rules suggests that the prohibition of members using the courts has ...to do with ...the concern to contain the rivalry and competition for honour and status that was typical of life in the circum Mediterranean world ...Taking a fellow member to court belonged on a spectrum of agonistic behaviour that also included challenges to the

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[98]Danker (1982), p.163.

[99]Smith (1981), pp.321-22. He also includes accusing one another before a public court in his summary of activities commonly forbidden by association statutes.

[100]Kloppenborg (1996b), p.257 n.45. *P.Lille dem* 29, *P.Cairo dem* 30605, *P.Cairo dem* 30606, *P. Cairo dem* 31179, *P.Mich. Tebt.* 243. I confess that I am not equipped to examine the demotic texts. However, with the exception of *P.Cairo dem* 31179, they all date from the second and third centuries BCE. In contrast, all the texts which I discuss below date from the first century BCE to the second century CE, i.e., they were all composed within approximately 100 years of 1 Corinthians.

integrity of another's household, attempts to assume his place at a banquet, and physical insults."[101] The rules aimed to forestall public disputes which could sour the internal life of associations while passing outside their control, and which might also damage their public reputation.

The scope of the relevant prohibitions is less clear cut. Danker, Smith and Kloppenborg seem to assume that these statutes forbid *all* court cases between association members. Yet, in the rule of the Iobacchoi,[102] the prohibition is plainly limited and specific. The individual struck at a meeting is forbidden from pursuing a court case rather than making a complaint to the President (lines 91-94). Nothing is said about quarrels which arose in a forum other than the meetings of the association. Nock, Roberts and Skeat comment upon the guild of Zeus Hypsistos[103] that "no one is to hale a fellow-member into court for anything arising out of their association in the synodos (cf. Plato, Leges, 11, p. 915E), all such causes of offence being under the jurisdiction of the president ...neither here nor in native Greek associations do we find any tendency of the guild to exercise such jurisdiction over other matters."[104] It seems that, in these cases, quarrels which arose elsewhere were of no concern to the associations, so long as their meetings were not used by the parties as a battlefield on which to prosecute their disputes. In *P.Mich. Tebt.* 243 the prohibition of court cases may be more general, since an obligation is laid on members to assist any of their fellows in trouble with the authorities or imprisoned for private debt (lines 7,11). However, even here, the outlawing of litigation comes immediately after a rule governing conduct at meetings (lines 8-9), and the editors comment that "the slander might well occur within the

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[101]Kloppenborg (1996b), pp.257-58.
[102]*SIG* 3.1109. See p.211 n.38.
[103]*P.Lond.* 2710. See p.221 n.73.
[104]Nock et al. (1936), p.53. Here the connection between a dispute at a meeting and the forbidden legal action is not quite as explicit, but the latter follows immediately after rules aimed at preventing the former: "It shall not be permissible ...for men to enter into one another's pedigrees at the banquet or to abuse one another at the banquet or to chatter or to indict or accuse another."

association itself."[105] On balance, the available evidence strongly suggests that associations prohibited litigation between members only when their disputes arose in meetings.

8.4.2 Litigation Between Believers in 1 Cor. 6:1-8

When one turns from the associations to look at the situation in Corinth discussed at 6:1-8, differences between the two are apparent. The motives for Paul's prohibition did include the need to forestall disputes which could sour the life of the church and damage its public reputation. He does wish "to avoid the shaming of one member by another,"[106] but his language suggests that something else was at the forefront of his mind.[107] Paul seems to have been disturbed by what he regarded as the inappropriateness of believers presenting their cases before unbelievers. ἢ οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι οἱ ἅγιοι τὸν κόσμον κρινοῦσιν; καὶ εἰ ἐν ὑμῖν κρίνεται ὁ κόσμος, ἀνάξιοί ἐστε κριτηρίων ἐλαχίστων; (6:2). It is the eschatological function of believers as judges, and the eschatological division between believers and the unrighteous, which render their indicting of one another before the world so offensive to Paul. He is as concerned as the Corinthians with the correct display of status, but the status which he wishes to be displayed is their collective eschatological one as saints. This demand for a shift of focus away from individual social status onto collective eschatological status is rather different from anything to be found among the associations. Paul plays off the latter against the former whereas the associations, with their ranks, and their honours in return for patronage, did not question the desire for individual social status, but instead simply harnessed it to the interests of the group.[108]

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[105]Husselman, Boak & Edgerton (1944), p.94. *P.Mich. Tebt.* 244 contains a similar obligation to help a fellow member imprisoned for debt, but has no prohibition of court cases between members.
[106]Kloppenborg (1996b), p.256.
[107]Winter (1991) also emphasises the corruption of the Corinthian courts. See above, p.132 n.85 and p.135 n.4.
[108]Kloppenborg (1996b), p.255 is therefore only partially correct when he argues that Paul seeks to "counter the status concerns of some of the Corinthians by transposing them to another level." Paul seeks to change the nature of these concerns as well as to shift their level. Mitchell, A.C. (1993) argues that the particular status dynamic relevant to 6:1-8 is richer Christians taking advantage of their

The scope of Paul's prohibition is also different. Although he is prepared to contemplate a system of internal arbitration (6:4-5), presumably similar to that found amongst the associations, it is clear that this is not his preference.[109] It is the existence of quarrels between Christians as such which dismays Paul, and he thinks that the Corinthians should prefer to be wronged and defrauded by one another rather than go to law (6:7b). Ἤδη μὲν οὖν ὅλως ἥττημα ὑμῖν ἐστιν ὅτι κρίματα ἔχετε μεθ' ἑαυτῶν (6:7a). Thus, Paul's concern extends to lawsuits between members of the church wherever the quarrels prompting them have arisen. Those which originate other than at meetings of the church are as great a problem as those that do. Paul forbids court cases which would be permissible, if undesirable, under association statutes. This is significant, since his expectations as to the proper approach to such matters are also clearly different from those of at least some of the Corinthians. Three times he begins questions with the phrase οὐκ οἴδατε, as if what he is about to say ought to have been obvious to his readers (6:2,3,9). A possible explanation for this mismatch is that the Corinthians' expectations were shaped by the narrower scope of the prohibition of litigation found among voluntary associations.[110] They assumed that a dispute between believers which arose in contexts other than a church meeting could be pursued through the courts like any other.[111]

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privileged position within the legal system to prosecute poorer ones. However, both Kloppenborg (1996b), p.254 and Meggitt (1998a), pp.122-125 correctly point out that it was possible for social equals to compete with each other in the courts.

[109]Mitchell, A.C. (1993), p.567 correctly insists that Paul was serious about internal arbitration, but understands this, and Paul's demand that quarrels be avoided, as either/or solutions. I see no need to play these two aspects of Paul's advice off against one other. His teaching on marriage is another area where Paul has strong preferences, but also alternatives. See 1 Cor. 7:8-11.

[110]Previous attempts to illuminate 6:1-8 using association statutes have not noted the fact that, if both Paul and the associations forbid all litigation between members, then Paul's attitude is like that of the associations but the Corinthians' attitude is not. My suggestion reverses this position. The Graeco-Roman associations influence the Corinthians, but Paul's approach may be more influenced by the common, although not universal, Jewish practice of settling all disputes without recourse to Gentile courts. See Barrett (1971b), p.135; Fee (1987), p.231 n.11.

[111]Mitchell, M. (1992), pp.151-52 suggests that Paul's renewed mention of σχίσματα at 11:18-19 is explained by his desire to emphasise that such divisions are in evidence when the Corinthians come together in assembly. Previously he "has dealt with manifestations of community disunity and strife which take place in the arena of relations among Christians within the larger social context of the city of Corinth." Disputes in contexts other than meetings may have been less likely among the associations.

Thus, it may be that Paul's condemnation of all their court cases against one another took the Corinthians by surprise. Their practical consciousness suggested a much narrower range of circumstances in which litigation between fellow believers might be unacceptable. Paul's demand that such disputes be avoided altogether asked for a more radical social adjustment than it was obvious to the Corinthians was necessary. Their practical consciousness moulded by the practice of associations, they viewed their obligations to one another as real, but also as more limited and more sharply defined than Paul is prepared to allow. The parallels between this difference of perception, and those which we saw in relation to questions of patronage and to competition at communal meals are obvious. Paul's vision for the life of the church sharply diverges from the norms of Graeco-Roman society, norms which we have seen embodied in the life of the associations, but he finds that his Corinthian converts are unable or unwilling to instantiate this vision in their behaviour to the degree that he would desire.[112] The difference is that, on the issue of litigation, the Corinthians are, if anything, even closer to the associations than in their patronage practices or in their celebrations of the Lord's Supper. There new social practices had been taken on but were shaped by existing practical consciousness; here, if they prohibited only litigation arising from disputes in church meetings, even the practice has remained the same.

Here there were membership fees, and if the *Iobacchoi* are any guide, then it may have been common for membership applications to be voted on by all the existing members. A potential social rival of an existing member may therefore have been unlikely to be admitted, whereas baptism is open to all.

[112]In this case, although it is clearly not Paul's preference, he is prepared to suggest a means by which legal conflicts within the community could be regulated when their elimination proves impossible. The instruction to appoint an arbitrator from within the community (6:4-5) means that Paul avoids the risk of removing such battles from the public courts only for them to poison the life of the church for the want of a means of resolution. In relation to patronage and common meals he offers no such system of regulation, even as a second best solution.

8.5 Money

8.5.1 Translocal Relationships Among the Voluntary Associations

Apart from the question of Paul's own support, the only financial matter referred to in the Corinthian correspondence is the Jerusalem collection (1 Cor. 16:1-4, 2 Cor. 8-9). That Paul and his converts should seek to aid another congregation of fellow believers so many hundreds of miles distant seems to confirm what has been accepted, even by the advocates of voluntary associations as an analogy for early Christianity, as the most striking dissimilarity between the two. The churches are connected to each other to a degree, and in a way, alien to the voluntary associations, which were predominantly local affairs.[113] However, in a recent article, this consensus has been questioned by Richard Ascough, who wishes to emphasise those translocal links which did exist between voluntary associations, so that "Christian congregations and voluntary associations can both be seen as locally based groups with limited translocal connections."[114] The elimination of what he regards as a false dichotomy will allow for "a more profitable use of the voluntary association as an analogy for understanding the formation and organisation of early Christian groups."[115] The nature and degree of translocal connections among voluntary associations is therefore a crucial preliminary question to the central one of how far early Christianity and the associations resembled one another in this respect.

Some types of association clearly did have translocal links, most notably the Dionysiac artists,[116] and the athletes. Both artists and athletes who won contests at sacred games were eligible to join the ἱερονίκαι, an association of victors. There is evidence from the province of Asia that the victors of each city met regularly,

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[113]See Barton and Horsley (1981), p.28; McCready (1996), pp.63-64; Meeks (1984), pp.78-80; Tod (1932), p.81; Wilcken (1984), p.35; Wilson, S. (1996), p.3.
[114]Ascough (1997), p.223.
[115]Ascough (1997), p.241.
[116]Ascough (1997), pp.233-34.

but none as to whether they federated and, elsewhere, there is no evidence of such meetings at all.[117] The ἱερονίκαι simply came together at the games themselves, and effectively disbanded once they were over. Like the artists, the athletes also had guilds open to all professionals, whether or not they had ever won a victory. Some of these guilds did have federated chapters, with each member affiliated to the chapter in his home city, but equally typical were temporary guilds "of the athletes who happened to come together as participants in a given festival."[118] This complex and somewhat confusing situation only changed in the second century CE when an athletic headquarters, the *athletarum curia*, was established in Rome, its officials providing administrative continuity between the meetings of the temporary guilds at the games.[119] There is thus clear evidence of translocal links among the guilds of artists and athletes, but the impulse to federate exists alongside that to make the basis of association into a local one (e.g. the victors of a particular city), and alongside that to meet only on a temporary basis at the games themselves. The translocal links which do exist associate members from different localities solely on the basis of profession, i.e., being an artist or an athlete.

Ascough also claims translocal relationships in the case of cult associations made up of those who continue the worship of their homeland despite residency in a foreign city.[120] Here there is even an example of financial assistance being sought and granted within a triangular relationship between an association of Tyrian merchants in Puteoli, one in Rome, and their home city. When the association in Puteoli found itself unable to pay the rent on its building, an appeal for help was sent to the

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[117]Forbes (1955), pp.240-42.
[118]Forbes (1955), p.243.
[119]Forbes (1955), pp.243-50. The officials of the *curia* also gradually assumed responsibility for organising the games, working alongside the traditional locally appointed officials such as the *agonothetai* at Isthmia.
[120]Ascough (1997), pp.228-30. As well as the association of Tyrian merchants discussed below, Ascough draws attention to associations of foreign merchants in classical Athens, and to an association of Roman traders on Delos around the turn of the eras.

Tyrian senate, which instructed the association in Rome to give financial aid.[121] That this is indeed a translocal relationship seems undeniable, but we should also note on what it was based. The association in Puteoli was dedicated to Helios Saraptenos, "a deity of the Phoenician coast,"[122] and the letter home to Tyre was written in 174 CE, a full ninety five years after the association's foundation. This is a testimony to the tenacious maintenance, across time and space, of a sense of local identity, of belonging to Tyre and to no other city. Assistance is granted because of a shared ethnic and geographical identity. Paradoxically, a translocal relationship is maintained through a highly localised sense of religious belonging.

One must conclude that while Ascough succeeds in demonstrating the existence of translocal relationships among some types of voluntary associations, the nature of these relationships should also be noted. They are based on common itinerant professions like those of artist or athlete, or on shared ethnic and geographical identity.[123] Outside of these confines there is little to suggest that voluntary associations typically enjoyed translocal relationships.[124] With these conclusions in mind, we turn to examine the Jerusalem collection and the Corinthians' attitude towards it.

8.5.2 The Jerusalem Collection and Translocal Relationships

Paul gives confident instructions concerning the collection for Jerusalem in 1 Cor. 16:1-4, and there appears to be no question in his mind that the Corinthians will contribute. However, by the time he wrote 2 Cor. 8&9, it is clear that

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[121]*CIG* 5853.

[122]White, L.M. (1990), p.32.

[123]To the degree that they may be regarded as voluntary associations, the regular temple tax makes diaspora synagogues another example of translocal links on the basis of a shared ethnic and geographical identity. For a discussion of the tax, see Nickle (1966), chapter 3.

[124]Ascough (1997), pp.230-33 also argues that the cults of Isis and Sarapis remained strongly Egyptian in content and were controlled by Egyptians. While Egyptian priests were certainly common, and the atmosphere surrounding these cults appealingly exotic, their ceremonies of initiation came to conform to the Eleusinian pattern (see **9.1.1**). It is also not clear whether, and to what degree, associations of initiates in different localities regarded themselves as connected. Lucius leaves his ceremonial robes in the temple at Kenchreai (Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI.29) and he only becomes a member of the collegium of *pastophori* in Rome after further initiations (XI.30).

problems had arisen.[125] "There is nothing to suggest that Paul has yet received a penny piece to transmit from Corinth to Jerusalem."[126] Thus, Paul finds himself in the awkward position of once again having to persuade the Corinthians to contribute, aware, as he does so, that to do this too forcefully may be read as open criticism of his readers' current inaction, and hence only serve to provoke further resentment. One suspects that his lavish praise of the Macedonians' efforts (2 Cor. 8:1-5) is a means by which to keep his criticisms indirect. The curious turns of phrase in 8:10-11 through which the Corinthians are described as having the desire to give (θέλω) but not the action (ποιέω) are further evidence of this. "He (Paul) wishes to avoid direct criticism of their failure to make good on their commitment to the project and at the same time to praise their professed desire to take part in it."[127]

All of this careful cajoling raises the issue of what had gone wrong. The immediate cause is obvious. "The cause ...was almost certainly conflict with Paul and disaffection with him in the congregation, in particular the painful visit which caused Paul such grief and led to his withdrawal from Corinth (2 Cor. 2:1-11)."[128] However, one wonders whether Paul did not also detect certain doubts amongst the Corinthians about the collection itself. Certainly he moves onto territory which seems to have more to do with justifying the collection as such,[129] rather than with any particular set of arrangements for it. He reminds the Corinthians of the example of Christ (8:9), but he also feels it necessary to stress that collecting in Corinth for Jerusalem is not an indication of partiality on his part towards the Jerusalem Christians (8:13-15). His

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[125]It is a matter of some controversy as to whether 2 Cor. 8&9 belong to the same letter. Betz (1985), pp.129-40 concludes that they do not, and that 2 Cor. 9 was addressed not to the church at Corinth, but to the other churches of Achaea. Whether or not Betz is correct is a matter which need not detain us, but we shall restrict our discussion to 2 Cor. 8, which all agree is addressed to the church at Corinth.

[126]Barrett (1973), p.242.

[127]Furnish (1984), p.418.

[128]Horrell (1995b), pp.74-75.

[129]I agree with Horrell (1995b), pp.75-76 that Paul had a variety of motives in undertaking the collection. It would play a role in salvation history by symbolising the fulfilment of the prophets' vision of the entry of the Gentiles into the people of God, it would promote church unity, and it would alleviate poverty. I also agree that in 2 Cor. 8 it is the alleviation of poverty which is emphasised.

intention is not that they should be relieved to the distress (θλῖψις) of the Corinthians, but simply that there should be equality (ἰσότης). In the case of a future hypothetical need on the part of the Corinthians the process would be reversed. "Those who have plenty in the present should supply those who lack, aware that at some point, or in some different way, the reverse may occur."[130] Finally, Paul quotes Exodus 16:18, so as to suggest that by inspiring the generosity of his people, God will ensure that none are in need, and none enjoy a surplus. Instead, there will be a perfectly equitable distribution, and enough for all.

All of this suggests some anxiety on Paul's part lest the Corinthians resent the collection. Whether such resentment had ever been expressed, or whether Paul merely suspected its existence, cannot be determined. Yet the very fact that it was in the air requires explanation, when the whole project had apparently been greeted by the Macedonian churches with the utmost enthusiasm (8:1-4), and as an opportunity to give themselves to the Lord (8:5). Why might the Corinthians feel differently? It is possible that they did not share Paul's sense of the church as universal as well as local, i.e., the collection expressed a sense of connection among the contributing churches, and between them and the Jerusalem church, which the Corinthians simply did not feel. Given that the only solid evidence for translocal relationships between associations concerns those based upon a common itinerant profession or upon ethnic identity, then this may be another case where the expectations of the Corinthians as to what it means to belong to the church are influenced by a practical consciousness which owes much to the voluntary associations. Cult groups in which the basis of association was devotion to a deity did

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[130]Horrell (1995b), p.78. Betz (1985), p.68 erroneously interprets 8:14 in the light of Rom. 15:27. As it is unlikely that the Corinthian church would ever be worse off than the Jerusalem one, Paul must intend "to speak of the spiritual wealth of the Jerusalem Christians to which the Corinthians were deeply indebted." But Paul's point is surely to emphasise that only equality is intended. That the Jerusalem church should at some future date provide the Corinthians with aid is indeed hypothetical, but is not thereby necessarily a spiritual hypothesis as opposed to a material one. Meggitt (1998a), pp.158-60 goes further, arguing that there is a real possibility of the collection being reciprocated at a future date. Given the somewhat tense relationship between Paul and the Jerusalem church one doubts this, but the terms in which Paul commends the Jerusalem collection strongly suggest that he would favour other mutual aid projects between congregations.

not support each other financially, so why should those groups devoted to Christ? The Corinthians expected the church to be, like these associations, essentially local, and evinced only lukewarm support for the collection because they did not accept its rationale.

Perhaps ironically, Ascough accepts that the Corinthians "remained unconvinced that they had a social and religious obligation to an otherwise unknown group."[131] Yet he holds this to suggest that translocal links between the churches were not as well developed as has usually been thought. Just as scholars have underestimated the extent of translocal relationships among voluntary associations, so they have overestimated their extent among the churches. There are considerable methodological difficulties here. Ascough uses the Corinthians' failure to understand the rationale behind the collection to support his case, but never mentions the enthusiasm of the Macedonians. Further, he admits that Paul may have thought of the churches he worked with as connected, but depicts this as largely wishful thinking on the part of the apostle.[132] This simply reverses the more common error of assuming that Paul's descriptions of how he believed churches ought to be reflect the way they actually were. Ascough replaces the priority of Paul in determining the nature of early Christianity with that of the Corinthians. He has joined the premature rush to generalisation which has afflicted so much work in this field, overlooking the possibility that the analogy between Christianity and the voluntary associations may be more fruitful for understanding some early Christians than others.

However, the very lack of nuance in Ascough's argument does serve a useful purpose. If his elimination of the differences between early Christianity and the voluntary associations in the matter of translocal links is too simplistic, it does at least suggest that merely to note the existence of a contrast is to fall into the same failing.

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[131]Ascough (1997), p.237.
[132]Ascough (1997), p.237; p.239 n.82.

There were translocal links among voluntary associations, but they were different in nature from those which we find in early Christianity.[133] Paul's converts lacked any ethnic, geographical or professional ties with Jerusalem. All that connected them was Christ, and this raises an interesting, if hypothetical, question. Would the Corinthians have had similar reservations if they had been asked to send financial support to a group of needy Corinthian or Achaean Christians who had migrated to another city? Perhaps not.[134] For Paul, religious belonging and mutual obligation depend simply upon common devotion to Christ, irrespective of origins, but perhaps to the Corinthians it was no more obvious that they had an obligation to aid another group of his worshippers with whom this was their sole connection, than it would have been to worshippers of Dionysus that they had a general obligation to one another. Paul has asked them to take on a new social practice in offering aid to the poor of the Jerusalem church but the Corinthians, their practical consciousness shaped by the implicit rules and resources governing translocal relationships among the voluntary associations, are hesitant.

8.6 Conclusions

We have traced, across a range of issues (patronage, the Lord's Supper, litigation and money), considerable differences in expectation between Paul and the Corinthians as to the consequences of conversion. That which strikes Paul as obvious is not so to the Corinthians. These differences can be attributed, in part, to the influence upon the Corinthians of the voluntary associations. While the Corinthian church was not a voluntary association, there are features of the Corinthians' behaviour and attitudes

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[133]A parallel here would be our discussion of the courts (**8.4.2**). There we found prohibitions against taking a fellow-member to court both among voluntary associations and from Paul, i.e. a genuine similarity, *and* we found that the motivation and scope of these prohibitions diverged, i.e., a striking difference.

[134]This is not to deny that Jewish Christians at Corinth may have had a strong sense of connection with Jerusalem, although it is to suggest that this sense had a strong ethnic component. Nor is it to deny that some of the Corinthians identified strongly with individual Christian leaders from other places, possibly including Jerusalem (c.f. the four 'parties' of 1 Cor. 1:12 and the super apostles of 2 Cor. 12:11). My suggestion here refers solely to translocal relationships between congregations as congregations.

which can be illuminated by analogy with the associations. With their practical consciousness shaped by the implicit rules and resources moulding the life of the voluntary associations, the Corinthians structure distinctively new Christian modes of practice (patronage, the Lord's Supper) along lines familiar from parallel aspects of the life of the associations. Here transformation has been accompanied by a greater degree of reproduction than Paul finds comfortable. The Corinthians also fail to abandon old practices (litigation between members), or to take on new ones (the Jerusalem collection), because their practical consciousness suggests that such steps are no more necessary now that they belong to a church than they would be had they belonged to an association. Here reproduction has outweighed transformation to a considerable degree. The following points in particular should be noted:

(i) The Corinthians do not perpetuate the system of honours in return for patronage so clearly visible among the associations. Yet neither do they adopt Paul's attitude, which accords honour informally, and in proportion to the fixity of purpose displayed, not in proportion to the material value of services rendered. Instead there is competition for status and honour every bit as strong as that found in associations, but without any clear regulation or limits.

(ii) One forum where such competition takes place is the Lord's Supper. Here those heads of households who enjoy a higher social status than the vast majority of the Corinthian congregation compete for honour and status in a way which leads to the neglect and exclusion of others. The Corinthians have not perpetuated the typically precise rules of conduct at table found among the associations, but neither have they abandoned the ethos which made those rules necessary. Again, competition rages unrestrained.

(iii) It is not obvious to the Corinthians that litigation between believers is wrong in all circumstances. This reflects the approach found within voluntary

associations where, despite suggestions to the contrary, prohibitions of litigation are limited to disputes which arise at meetings of the group. For the Corinthians, the questions of individual social status which might prompt litigation remain important whereas, for Paul, conversion ought to have produced an alternative focus on their new collective eschatological status.

(iv) The Corinthians hesitate when asked to contribute to Paul's Jerusalem collection. It is not obvious to them that they have obligations of mutual aid to another group with which they have no ethnic, geographical or itinerant professional ties. Again, this reflects the life of the voluntary associations where, despite arguments to the contrary, translocal relationships were limited to those groups which possessed such ties. For Paul, conversion creates an obvious, and reciprocal, obligation of aid to all fellow believers in Christ.

It is hoped that the above conclusions serve to establish a methodological point. By approaching the influence of the voluntary associations upon the Corinthian church from the perspective of conversion it has been possible to move away from the too general discussion of whether, and to what degree, early Christianity resembles the voluntary associations. The use of structuration theory to analyse divergence in expectations between Paul and the Corinthians, between an advocate of conversion and his converts, reveals two important points. Firstly, not all early Christians will have been susceptible to the influence of the associations to the same degree and, secondly, even with the Corinthians it is not always a straightforward question of resemblance or its absence. In some cases their practices do resemble those of the associations, but in others it is their inability, when viewed from Paul's perspective, to cope with new practices very different from those of the associations which demonstrates most clearly the influence of the latter upon them.

There are also some general points which emerge from the above conclusions and which help to characterise the differences in expectation between Paul and the Corinthians as to the consequences of conversion. One is that the Corinthians feel far more comfortable than does Paul with the norms and structures of Graeco-Roman society. As we saw above (**8.1.1**), the associations served as a bridge between the private and public domains, and as a means of social integration. They asserted a connection between the socially superior and the socially inferior while at the same time maintaining the gulf in status between them. The Corinthians seem happy for their Christianity to perform similar functions.[135] Paul, for all he is no social radical, does not view the church as a vehicle for this sort of social integration. The integration which he desires is that of the believers, in whose common life he wishes outsiders to find an alternative vision of reality. This means that status patterns and concerns within the church ought to be different from those within society, something which may require the abandonment of old social practices, and structures, and the adoption of new ones.

Further, the Corinthians regard conversion as establishing a narrower range of obligations towards other Christians than does Paul. This can be seen most clearly in their lack of a sense of financial obligation to Christians outside their own group, their acceptance of the propriety of some court cases between believers, and their failure to award honour within the church on the basis of desire to serve rather than on that of social prestige. Like the associations, the Corinthians have a rather more segmented sense of religious belonging than does Paul.[136] For both, conversion established a set of obligations towards fellow Christians, but for Paul the scope of those obligations was wider.

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[135]Barclay (1992), pp.57-60.

[136]See Meeks (1983), pp.78-79. One could have the same discussion in terms of 'intensity', but this could imply a necessarily more fervent devotion on the part of Christians than that to be found on the part of association members. For this reason metaphors of breadth are to be preferred to those of depth, as there is no reason to doubt that associations could inspire deep group loyalty among their members. The difference is that it was expressed through a narrower range of mutual obligations.

Finally, the very breadth of the mutual obligations which Paul regards as a consequence of conversion makes it difficult for the Corinthians to comply with his wishes. Although he did not leave them completely without instructions or traditions on which to base their common life,[137] Paul's sense of religious belonging could be regarded as a dangerously under-defined one to urge upon a group of new converts. In comparison, the associations provided their members with a much stronger system of regulation in which rules served as mechanisms by which to channel and control potentially disruptive social impulses. If Paul had offered the Corinthians a more precisely defined set of rights and responsibilities, his wishes may have been better received and more closely followed. However, even as they define mutual responsibilities, rules also limit them. Had Paul provided his converts with a set of statutes in the manner of an association, one wonders how much of an achievement he would have considered their observance to be. His understanding of conversion required a resocialisation that was "extraordinarily thoroughgoing."[138]

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[137]See above, p.125 n.58.
[138]Meeks (1983), p.78.

9

Corinthian Conversion and Mystery Initiation

9.1 Introduction

9.1.1 Understanding the Mysteries

The more the available evidence concerning the mysteries has been subjected to critical scrutiny, the more elusive they have become. In his *Ancient Mystery Cults*, perhaps the best available general work on the subject, Walter Burkert describes the way in which earlier, apparently solid, conclusions have crumbled.[1] That the mysteries belonged to late antiquity, that they were Oriental in style, spirit and origin, and that they represented a basic change in the outlook of Graeco-Roman religion,[2] are all assured results of scholarship which now appear simply to have been mistaken. Of those mysteries which achieved widespread appeal,[3] only that of Mithras, and the particular *taurobolium* form of initiation into the cult of Cybele make their first appearances in the Graeco-Roman world during the common era, while the mysteries of Demeter and Kore at Eleusis can be traced back to the sixth century B.C.E., and those of Dionysus to only slightly later. This venerable pair were certainly not meaningfully Oriental in origin,[4] and although the mysteries of Cybele, Isis and Mithras were, they underwent a process of Hellenization following their introduction into the Graeco-Roman world. Broadly speaking, this process was one by which the *newer* arrivals

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[1]Burkert (1987), pp.1-11. Wedderburn (1987b), p.vii comments that the non-specialist in the field must to some degree "depend upon the work of others and hope that he or she has picked the right mystagogues to follow." I have inevitably done so in order to establish a picture of the mysteries with which to then approach the evidence provided by 1 Corinthians, but hope that I have made informed choices.

[2]Takacs (1995), pp.1-5 also launches an attack on this third point, which he couples with criticism of the idea that the mystery cults held particular appeal for the lower classes. The terms of this argument sound remarkably familiar to anyone acquainted with debate among N.T. scholars concerning the social status of early Christians.

[3]There were others whose appeal was more restricted but nevertheless significant. See Burkert (1987), p.4 n.16. Archaeological and literary evidence suggests the existence of a localised mystery cult at Isthmia. See below pp.66-71

[4]Their origins are lost in the mists of the archaic period, so an eastern birth cannot be ruled out. See Koester (1982), p.197.

conformed to the pattern of the Eleusinian cult.[5] Although the content of myths and details of rites often remained Oriental, and in doing so provided exotic appeal, it was Eleusis which provided the rite of initiation with all that it signified.[6] For, "though it is evident that Mater Magna is the Phrygian Goddess for both Greeks and Romans, and that Isis is Egyptian and Mithras is Iranian, the institution of mysteries cannot be traced to either Anatolia, Egypt, or Iran."[7] That these deities only became associated with mysteries in the Graeco-Roman world illustrates the point that their arrival does not mark a religious revolution. Although we shall argue that the mysteries did influence the Corinthians' understanding of Christianity, they did so from within the conglomerate of 'native' Graeco-Roman religion not, as has often been argued, as fellow new arrivals from the east offering similar and competing messages of redemption.[8]

Recognition of this embededness within wider Graeco-Roman religion means that it is no longer appropriate to speak of mystery *religions*. Undergoing one initiation did not preclude others, and nor did it preclude offering worship to other deities whose cults did not have mysteries. Throughout what follows the term used will therefore instead be mystery *cults*. However, even this designation requires qualification, since by no means every worshipper of the mystery deities had been initiated. Many worshipped these deities in just the same way as they did other gods and goddesses, bringing petitions and promises in times of anxiety or danger, and gifts and donations in response to successful outcomes. For example, not every seafarer who asked Isis for protection under her aspect as Isis *Pelagia* will have been an initiate.[9] Indeed, it may well

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[5]Nock (1972) Vol. II, p.797 makes a similar point.
[6]Apart from those of Demeter, the mysteries of the deities mentioned in this paragraph could be performed anywhere. Farnell (1907), p.199f. gives details of centres other than Eleusis which had mysteries of Demeter. A number of these have legends which claim early 'authorisation' from Eleusis, and it is unclear whether this has any basis in fact, or whether it is a later fiction to justify their continuing existence once Eleusis had been accepted as *the* centre for the mysteries of Demeter.
[7]Burkert (1987), p.2. Also Koester (1982), p.197.
[8]Nock (1972), Vol. I, p.345: "The truth is that among the so-called Oriental mystery-religions Christianity was the only one which was Oriental in its nature in spite of the fact that it was less Oriental and exotic in its trappings ...Its rivals had all been translated into Greek terms."
[9]In Apuleius' description of a public procession to honour Isis at the start of the sea-going season, initiates appear to be one specific, if sizeable, group within a greater mass. *Metamorphoses* XI.10.

be that in the worship of these deities, initiation was but the tip of an iceberg of such votive religion, and represents principally an intensification of its search for effective protection from the hazards of life and death.[10] Yet if to speak even of mystery *cults* runs the risk of implying too monolithic a phenomenon, it also captures that which makes it possible to speak of a single phenomenon at all, for it is the fact that they have mysteries which distinguishes these deities as a group. They have secret rites of initiation in which individuals see and experience the mysteries, whereas other cults do not. The term mystery *cults* is therefore an appropriate one, if used with the foregoing qualifications in mind.

If initiation is what makes mystery cults, then some discussion of it is required.[11] It too is elusive, since these rites were secret, and given that they were conducted over a period spanning around a thousand years, the taboo against divulging their contents was remarkably effective. However, if their details remain obscure, we do know something of their intention. Initiation was expected to be an extraordinary experience, providing the individual with an immediate and transforming encounter with the divine. This encounter was a visual one. Ritual objects might be revealed, and the real blessing which initiation provided lay in the individual having seen the divine.[12] The expected result was "a *pathos* in the soul, or *psyche*, of the candidate ...at the final stage of the mysteries there should be no more 'learning' (*mathein*) but 'experiencing' (*pathein*), and a change in the state of mind (*diatethenai*)."[13] The initiate emerged having attained a spiritually exalted state, the best known and most striking description of which is provided by Plutarch who, using the mysteries as a metaphor for death, writes that by the climax of the rite the initiate "walks at large in new freedom, now perfect and fully

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[10]The exception here is Mithras, whose cult had no public worship, his devotees and his initiates forming identical groups. See Beck (1996), pp.176-77.

[11]See Burkert (1987), chapter IV.

[12]Apuleius *Metamorphoses* XI,23: "In the middle of the night I saw the sun flashing with bright light. I came face to face with the gods below and the gods above and paid reverence to them from close at hand."

[13]Burkert (1987), p.89. He is here referring to Aristotle, *fr.*15.

initiated, celebrating the sacred rites, a garland upon his head, and conversing with pure and holy men; he surveys the uninitiated, unpurified mob here on earth, the mob of living men ...herded together in mirk and deep mire."[14]

Perhaps remarkably, given this strong sense of a change in spiritual status, initiation seems to have had little or no social consequences. It was certainly not by the Common Era in any sense a counter cultural act,[15] but rather perfectly respectable, yet nor did it automatically lead to an improvement in the social status of the initiate. Each initiate no doubt hoped that the deity would be generous, and that prosperity and social advancement would follow, but this was a matter between the deity and the individual, not a significance attached by society to initiation as a rite. What it did do was to provide entry to a θίασος of the deity, and we have no reason to believe that associations composed solely of initiates were any different from others in terms of the sort of opportunities they offered for individual social advancement, or the reinforcement they provided for the existing social order.[16] Cult associations certainly competed for honour, and membership of certain associations may sometimes have carried greater prestige than membership of others. In such cases social prestige may have acted as a motive prompting initiation. Yet the very fact that different associations of initiates might enjoy different degrees of prestige makes the point that, even where initiation was the route to sharing in such prestige, it was not its source.

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[14]Plutarch, *fr.*168. Quoted by Burkert (1987), pp.91-92; Wedderburn (1987b), p.152. While he is quite clear that the philosopher is far superior to the performer of mystic rites, Plato (*Phaedrus* 248DE) nevertheless uses initiation as a metaphor by which to stress the enlightenment enjoyed by the philosophical soul, exalted far beyond the comprehension of the masses (*Phaedrus* 249-50). He also uses the metaphor of initiation to argue that philosophy is a κάθαρσις which fits the soul to dwell with the gods after death (*Phaedo* 69CD). In contrast, the uninitiated will lie in the mire.

[15]Although this had not always been true, especially in the case of the Dionysiac mysteries, which were infamously and brutally suppressed in Rome in 186 B.C.E. Yet by our period such events lay in the distant past. It is true that the cult of Isis was not definitively established in Rome itself until the reign of Caligula, but its earlier expulsion seems to have been due to the scandalous conduct of individual priests and devotees. See Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.65-80. Further, as Koester (1982), p.365 points out, "even if imperial Rome was still opposed to the introduction of new cults into the city of Rome itself, there were no official restrictions pertaining to the expansion of these religions in the provinces of the Roman empire."

[16]See above, p.204.

The question of what, if any, consequences initiation had for morality is a complex one. On the one hand, the picture drawn by Christian apologists of the mystery cults as epicentres of sexual immorality is certainly false.[17] On the other, there is little evidence that initiation implied *category* changes in moral attitudes. Certain Augustan poets do express frustration at the periods of celibacy undertaken by their mistresses as a preparation for Isiac worship, but Isis neither made them mistresses nor caused them to cease from being so.[18] One might conclude from this that initiation had no impact on morality, but the periods of celibacy are not without their own significance. In Apuleius, Mithras, priest of Isis, declares that prior to his transformation into an ass, Lucius had fallen into slavish pleasures (*seruiles voluptates*),[19] a reference to his affair with Photis. This condemnation is not an attack on the relationship as such, but rather on the controlling influence which sexual desire had then exercised over Lucius. In a life of service to Isis, involving arduous periods of celibacy,[20] desire will be put in its proper place, which is subordinate to religious concerns. While initiation did not set initiates at odds with the norms of Graeco-Roman society through a change in moral categories, it might, in certain circumstances, imply a change in moral priorities.[21]

The curiously neutral impact of initiation upon social status and its somewhat limited impact upon morality is a reflection of the degree to which undertaking it was understood as a specifically individual decision and experience, something which, "given the underdeveloped state of introspection in the ancient world,

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[17]See Heyob (1975), chapter 5.
[18]Tibullus 1.3.26, Propertius 2.33.1f., 4.5.34.
[19]Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI.15.
[20]Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI.19.
[21]I therefore disagree with Shumate (1996), pp.12-13 who presents the reader with a sharp choice between understanding Lucius' conversion in either epistemological or moral terms, arguing in favour of the former. Closer to the mark is Walsh (1994), p.xxxii who links the two in the suggestion that "Lucius' avid curiosity to explore the realm of magic, attained by way of sexual encounter with Photis, was punished because it was a perverted path to universal knowledge." The moral component of Lucius' conversion is very different from that found in conversion to Judaism or Christianity, but it is nevertheless present.

as seen from a modern vantage point ...is remarkable."[22] Initiation did not confront society with any overt consequences because society burdened nobody with the expectation that they be initiated, and nor did it discourage them. Although the influence of family, friends or colleagues might naturally play a part in a decision to be initiated, it is an influence which such close associates might exercise over any major decision in an individual's life. There is no general connection between initiation and family, clan, or trade. Rather, initiation had a voluntary character, and undertaking it represented a decision to enter into a considerable personal commitment to the deity concerned. The only restriction upon undertaking it was the expense involved, which could in some cases be considerable.[23] Whether this was so in every time and place is not clear, but one could be too poor to be initiated.

If initiation was voluntary, and did not bring with it any automatic improvement in social status, the question arises of what those being initiated hoped to achieve through it. What were the hoped-for benefits? Success in life has already been mentioned, and we find an example of this in Lucius' attribution of a successful legal career to the goodwill of Isis and that of her consort Osiris.[24] In effect, the divine couple became his patrons, granting blessings in return for continued devotion. In Lucius' case

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[22]Burkert (1987), p.89.

[23]See Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI.23,27,28,30. Here successive initiations are portrayed as using up all Lucius' resources despite the fact that his family enjoyed considerable social status (*Metamorphoses* II.3). Examining the evidence of inscriptions relating to associations of Isiac initiates, Vidman (1970), p.127 concludes that their memberships were not large "da die Mysterien bei allen orientalischen Mysterienreligionen der Kaiserzeit sehr kostspielig waren." He also suggests, n.11, that this contrasts with the older Greek mysteries which were "nicht alle kostspielig." This depends rather on how one defines 'kostspielig'. We know that in the fourth century B.C.E. the initiation of two slaves at Eleusis cost 15 drachmas each (*I.G.* II.2, 1672). Mitchell, A. (1940), p.131 and Parke (1977), p.61 seem agreed that this sum then represented 1-2 weeks wages for a skilled workman in the building trades. Vidman and Wedderburn (1987b), p.102 n.31 assess this as cheap; Parke and Dillon (1997), p.168 and Richardson, N.J. (1974), p.21 think the expense considerable. Kerenyi (ET 1967), pp.59-60 points to the case of one Lysias who, in the same period, paid for the initiation of his slave-girl lover, perceiving it to be an impressive gift. See Demosthenes, *In Neaeram* LIX.21. Perhaps the key to assessing this contradictory evidence is numbers. The very large numbers of initiates there suggests that the cost of initiation at Eleusis, while considerable, was not prohibitive. Plato, *Resp.*378A seems to wish that it were. Yet if Vidman is right that the number of Isiac initiates was comparatively small, the cost of initiation into some cults in a later period could indeed be prohibitive. People who could have afforded Eleusis several centuries earlier might not have been able to afford Isis in the Common Era.

[24]Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI.6,28.

there is also a clear promise of longevity. So great is Isis' power that she can prolong Lucius' days beyond those appointed for him by fate.[25] What she promises him beyond death is less concrete. Certainly there is a promise of blessedness, but the details are vague, and the very promise of longevity indicates something. The thought that death might be gain (Phil. 1:21) would be an alien one in this context. Indeed, the degree to which Graeco-Roman religion as a whole extended hope for the life to come is a subject of some controversy. Ramsay MacMullen has suggested that it was scarcely prominent at all,[26] and certainly the mentions we have of it in the context of the mysteries are allusive. There is nothing that might be compared and contrasted with the sort of discussion of the specific details of continued personal existence provided by Paul in 1 Cor. 15. "A redirection of religion towards other-worldly concerns, contrary to what is often assumed, is not to be found with the 'Oriental' gods and their mysteries. At best they continue what was already there."[27]

Yet as the allusions show, there was already something there, existing alongside such expressions of indifference as the famous epitaph 'I was not, I am not, I care not.'[28] If this were not so in relation to the mysteries then there would be no point to Diogenes' criticism of Sophocles' certainty that blessedness awaited initiates but not others.[29] However vague the references, hope for the hereafter does appear to have played a part in initiation, even if not a central one. Some in the ancient world did not believe in life after death, but others did, and we can expect to find that initiates were among those who believed. Yet the degree to which they enjoyed what Christians would term assurance is unclear. Burkert draws attention to a funerary inscription for a seven year old boy from third or fourth century CE Rome. His parents had ensured his

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[25]Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI.6. This also appears to be the benefit of the *taurobolium* ritual in the cult of Cybele. See MacMullen (1981), p.55.
[26]MacMullen (1981), pp.53-57.
[27]Burkert (1987), p.28.
[28]See MacMullen (1981), p.57.
[29]Plutarch, *Moralia* I.21F. For other evidence that the mysteries might grant hope for the after-life see *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* 480-82, Isokrates 4.28, Pindar *fr.* 137a, Sophocles *fr.* 837, Cicero *De Legibus* 2.14.36.

initiation into the cults of several deities, but now their frank advice is 'forget ...the mysteries.'[30] It seems that instead of the mysteries providing them comfort in the face of tragedy, the premature death of the child has destroyed their hopes for life beyond death. If the power of the gods could not ensure longevity, then neither could it be effective after death. The one would have been proof of the other, but the failure of one means the failure of the other. Presumably when the child was initiated they had entertained hopes, it was simply that events had falsified them. Such relentless pragmatism perhaps accounts for the mixed messages which we seem to receive about the mysteries and life after death. Not all who had been initiated could enjoy good fortune in this life, and therefore not all could trust to the protection of the gods for the next. In relation to life after death, it seems that initiation did imply some sort of hope, but it could often be rather an experimental one. We might expect successful lawyers like Lucius to be more certain than others of the power of the gods, and of the effectiveness of initiation in securing their goodwill.

Whatever was hoped for, how was it to be achieved? What was the nature of the relationship between the individual and the deity created by initiation? Here it has traditionally been argued, particularly within the History of Religions School, that the initiate was understood to share the sufferings of a dying deity, and thence also to share their rising again to new life.[31] If we are right that hope for life after death through the mysteries could be vague and experimental, then the notion of the centrality of dying and rising is perhaps a doubtful hypothesis from the start. Yet even allowing a maximalist estimation of the evidence for life after death as a concern of initiation, there remains the problem of an overwhelming lack of evidence for the specific idea of sharing in the dying

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[30]Burkert (1987), pp.28-29. It is true that Plutarch, in a letter to his wife on the death of their child, does refer to their Dionysiac initiation in connection to hopes for the after-life. However, it was the parents and not the child (aged 2) who had been initiated, and the after-life Plutarch speaks of is a general one to be enjoyed by all. He and his wife have been taught such hope by tradition and by the initiation rites. *Cons. ad. uxorem* 611d.

[31]See Bousset (ET 1970), p.192: "the participant in the cult actively and imitatively takes part in the destiny of the god in frenzied grief and exuberant joy." Also Weiss (ET 1937) Vol.II, pp.520, 638: "union with the deity is accomplished by imitating his experiences." Also Lohse (ET 1976), p.234f.

and rising of a deity. While it is true that, for the initiate, the mysteries could be thought of as a sort of voluntary death and rebirth,[32] there is no evidence that this was conceived as a reflection of the experience of the deity. For instance, Lucius was initiated first into Isis and then later into Osiris in different ceremonies, but in all the versions of their myths that we possess, Isis merely mourns the death of Osiris and secures his return to life. She remains resolutely alive throughout.[33] Similarly, what little we know of the content of the Eleusinian rites suggests that the emphasis was on imitating the actions of Demeter, who once again was the grieving member of that particular divine family, not the one that had died.[34] The most that could be suggested was that the power of the bereaved deity to restore their loved one to life might be taken as an encouragement to initiates that the same could one day be done for them. The emphasis was on the patronage of the deity, and his or her power to protect the initiate in this world and beyond.[35]

9.1.2 The Corinthians and the Mystery Cults

It therefore seems that the concept of sharing the experience of a dying and rising deity has simply been a projection back onto the mystery cults of Christian ideas about the sacraments. Paul's statements that baptism involves dying and later rising with Christ are not a result of the influence of the mystery cults over his theology, but instead mark a considerable divergence between Paul's ideas and theirs. "The mysteries were not saying the same thing as Paul, nor was Paul borrowing his ideas from the mysteries."[36] Yet what of the Corinthians? If the understanding of the mystery cults and of initiation which I have outlined above is substantially correct then, at first sight, my

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[32]Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* XI.21. For evidence of the *taurobolium* ritual in the cult of Cybele being understood in this way see *CIL* 6.510. Wedderburn (1987a), p.373 suggests that some of the imagery in the frescoes at the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii can plausibly be taken as portraying ritual enactments or anticipations of death. Vermaseren (1963), pp.131-35 argues the same in relation to the *Mithraeum* at Sta Maria Capua Vetere.

[33]Wedderburn (1987a), pp.57-64.

[34]Wedderburn (1987a), pp.62-64.

[35]Wedderburn (1987a), pp.56-57. Ziesler (1990), pp.14-15: "The idea of death and subsequent rebirth (let alone resurrection) *with the god* is not to be found in these cults ...what they did promise was life under the power of the god, life here and hereafter." His italics.

[36]Wedderburn (1987b), p.396.

own view that the Corinthians were influenced by the mystery cults appears dubious. For previous attempts to discern such influence have located it in precisely those 'sacramental' ideas which are now found to be notably absent from the mystery cults. According to this view, Paul's emphasis on dying and rising with Christ in baptism reflects his acceptance of a mystery-influenced 'sacramentalism' already current within Gentile Christianity. He did, however, modify it, arguing against notions of automatic efficacy in which the rite itself guaranteed salvation irrespective of subsequent conduct. Paul introduces a moral element.[37] Thus, Paul's sacramentalism is influenced by the mystery cults; that of his Gentile converts, such as the Corinthians, even more so. But, if the concept of sharing the experience of a dying and rising deity was in fact absent from the mystery cults, then the idea that the Corinthians were influenced by the mystery cults appears to perish along with the idea that Paul himself came under such influence.

In this chapter, I attempt to break this apparent connection. I do not believe that Paul's understanding of baptism or the Lord's Supper was influenced by the mystery cults. However, I do believe that the Corinthians' understanding of these rites, especially baptism, did come under such influence. This influence helps to account for some of the differences between themselves and Paul, over baptism and the Lord's Supper, to which 1 Corinthians bears witness. Further, and crucially, this influence is that of the mystery cults as understood above (**9.1.1**), not that of the cults of dying and rising deities pictured by the History of Religions School. For it is precisely the Corinthians' failure to take on the sort of understanding of baptism expressed by the idea of dying and rising with Christ that helps to account for the differences between themselves and Paul.

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[37]Käsemann (ET 1964), p.119: "Paul shares the premises of his time and yet draws different conclusions from them." See also Bultmann (ET 1952), pp.311-14. This argument is already present in embryonic form in Weiss (ET 1937) Vol.II, pp.636-39, who thinks it obvious that mystery concepts are "wrought into the structure" of Paul's notion of dying and rising with Christ in baptism, but who nevertheless concludes that "a tendency of Hellenistic piety thrusts its way into his own religion without thereby becoming fundamental."

The Corinthians have an alternative understanding of baptism influenced by the ideas of the mystery cults about initiation.[38]

I explore this understanding through an examination of the other passages in 1 Corinthians where baptism is discussed (1:14-17, 12:13, 15:29). As in relation to voluntary associations, it is important to establish the type of influence which is being argued for. I am not suggesting that the Corinthians saw no differences between baptism and initiation, or somehow turned baptism into a mystery initiation. For one thing, the rite of baptism was very probably much shorter, less elaborate, and involved much less in the way of preparation than did initiation.[39] Further, there is no evidence that anything like baptism existed among the mystery cults. There are purificatory washings in abundance, as in other cults, but nothing which suggests "immersion into a river or basin as a symbol of starting a new life."[40] The rituals themselves are quite different. Yet, if the ceremonies looked quite different, what of their *significance*? As with voluntary associations, my argument suggests that the Corinthians instinctively draw on certain familiar patterns in order to make sense of their new faith. The Corinthians have accepted baptism as a result of the teaching of Paul and/or his fellow-workers, but at the level of practical consciousness they have made sense of the rite not only in terms of that teaching, but also in terms of the most comparable rite within their

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[38]My position therefore implies that, far from embracing participatory ideas about baptism with a greater enthusiasm than Paul wished, the Corinthians found such ideas difficult. This turns a current consensus on its head, for all major recent commentaries suggest that the Corinthians were 'magical sacramentalists' who believed that participation in the sacraments provided a complete guarantee of future salvation irrespective of any immoral conduct in which they might indulge. See Barrett (1971b), pp.220,224; Conzelmann (ET 1975), pp.167-68; Fee (1987), p.443; Schrage (1995), pp.381,385-86,396. I believe this consensus to be an exegetical fantasy, and do not consider that their supposed 'magical sacramentalism' forms a credible objection to my own arguments as to the influence of the mystery cults on the Corinthians. I set out the case against 'magical sacramentalism' in **Appendix 3**, but use this chapter to put the positive arguments in favour of my own view.

[39]This was to change in the fourth century when the vocabulary used to describe baptism came to resemble quite closely that used of initiation. Nock (1972) Vol. II, p.818: "The free application of mystery terminology to the Christian sacraments ...belongs essentially to the period of the triumph of the church ...It was a matter of diplomatic and pedagogic technique and involved a fairly conscious effort, which is made very clear in various sermons to catechumens awaiting baptism on Easter Eve, to evoke the right sentiments and to maintain these sentiments thereafter."

[40]Burkert (1987), p.101.

existing culture. Like initiation, baptism was a voluntary act. However much individuals undertaking it may have been influenced by those close to them, here too, neither family, clan nor trade was the basis of entry. It is perhaps therefore not surprising that the Corinthians should construe the consequences of baptism along lines familiar from initiation into the mystery cults.[41]

What evidence is there that they in fact did so? There are two general features of the Corinthians' attitude towards the consequences of baptism for which the influence of initiation may help to account:

(i) We have already seen that, while no social revolutionary, Paul does expect social status within the church to be relativised (**3.3.7**). Despite this, the import of 12:14-26 seems to be that wealthier Corinthian Christians still expect to be accorded positions of leadership as would naturally have been their due according to the habits of society at large.[42] Do they expect baptism, like initiation, to have no direct consequences for social status?

(ii) Similarly, Paul expects that, having been purified in baptism (6:11), the Corinthians make moral category changes which instantiate, in their behaviour, the fundamental distinction between their current selves as believers and their former selves as members of Graeco-Roman society (**4.3.3**). Yet the Corinthians still use their city's law courts and eat in its temple dining rooms (6:1-8, 8:10). Some visit the brothels

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[41]This suggestion does not require that the majority of Corinthian Christians had been initiated into a mystery cult prior to their conversion. Some may have been, but all that is necessary is awareness of the religious and social significance of initiation, not knowledge of the secret details of any particular initiation rites. Evidence for the likely diffusion of such awareness among the population can be found in an excursus (**9.5**) detailing the archaeological evidence for the presence of mystery cults in first century Corinth.

[42]This would seem to be the context demanded by 12:14-26 where Paul uses the image of the body to represent the church and to stress the importance of its weaker members, whereas Graeco-Roman authors often used the body as an image to represent society and to stress the dependency of the weak upon the strong. See Martin (1991), pp.563-69.

(6:12-20), others indulge in sexual abstinence (7:1-7).[43] Do they expect baptism, like initiation, to bring changes in moral priorities, but not in moral categories?

These two suggestions concern absences in the Corinthians' understanding of conversion which Paul finds distressing. Yet the influence of initiation can also help to account for the form taken by one of the most dominant presences in the Corinthians' understanding of their new faith, namely their possession by the Spirit (**7.2**). This suggestion may appear surprising given that one cannot find within Graeco-Roman religion "precise parallels to the idea of the ritual bestowal of the Spirit."[44] Further, this absence holds true for initiation and, indeed, the sort of ecstatic behaviour through which the Corinthians expressed their possession by the Spirit is typically episodic within Graeco-Roman religion. It is not a continuous feature of individuals' existence, or of worship, as it is within Christianity.[45] Yet while the Corinthians conceive of their possession of the Spirit as permanent, identifying themselves as πνευματικοί (**9.2.2**), they once again do not perceive this to have implications for their behaviour in the way that Paul does. He frustratedly asks οὐκ οἴδατε ὅτι ναὸς θεοῦ ἐστε καὶ τὸ πνεῦμα τοῦ θεοῦ οἰκεῖ ἐν ὑμῖν (3:16);[46] The Corinthians apparently do not appreciate that their union with God through possession by the Spirit implies a daily conforming of their character and conduct to His.

In this they behave more as if possession by the Spirit denotes simply that God has extended to them his patronage and his power (6:12; 10:23). This seems to echo the understanding of union with the divine found within the mystery cults. There the initiate can even be said to become identified with the divine, but not "in the sense

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[43]Given the example of the mistresses of Tibullus and Propertius (see above, p.248 n.18), it is clear that both types of conduct might be possible for an initiate into a mystery cult. The observance of periodic and stringent temporary celibacy so as to grant priority to worship did not rule out sexual relations outside of marriage at other times.

[44]Wedderburn (1987b), p.290.

[45]Wedderburn (1987b), p.268f.

[46]See also 1 Cor. 6:19.

that the initiate becomes one of the gods that already exist or even that his role and status are completely equivalent to theirs, but only in the sense that he shares the powers which that god makes available to his devotees. And that involves not so much a change of nature or substance as a change of status and potential."[47] What is missing here is any equivalent to the participatory categories which are so important to Paul. Thus, while the receipt of the Spirit does, in itself, mark a difference between baptism and initiation, the way in which the Corinthians understand their possession of the Spirit seems to reflect the significance granted to union with the divine by the mystery cults. *As with initiates into the mystery cults, the Corinthians perceive baptism as the entry point to a new exalted personal religious status.*

To summarise, the History of Religions School's presentation of the mystery cults, as characterised by dying and rising deities, is thoroughly discredited. The mystery cults therefore simply cannot have exercised influence upon Paul or his Gentile converts in this direction. Yet, perhaps ironically, this does not mean that initiation into the mystery cults failed to influence the Corinthians' attitude towards baptism in other ways. When considered from the perspective of practical consciousness, there are grounds for proposing that initiation influenced the Corinthians' understanding of the consequences of baptism. The absence of any perceived impact on social status, and of moral category changes, is suggestive. So too is the construal of baptism as the entry point to a new exalted personal religious status, understood more in terms of divine patronage and protection than of the participatory categories important to Paul.

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[47]Wedderburn (1987b), p.341.

9.2 The Spirit

9.2.1 Baptism and the Spirit - 1 Cor. 12:13

One of the reasons why the Corinthians construe baptism as the entry point to a new exalted personal religious status is that it was at baptism that they received the Spirit. It was this experience which confirmed that they had indeed progressed to a higher level of existence under God's patronage and protection, and which prompted their assessment of the significance of baptism in similar terms to that of initiation. It is therefore vital to my argument that the Corinthians did understand baptism to be the point at which they received the Spirit. Were the connection between the two to be severed, then it might become difficult to maintain a connection between the Corinthians' practical consciousness in relation to baptism and that in relation to initiation. Fortunately however, a connection is made between baptism and the receipt of the Spirit at 1 Cor. 12:13: καὶ γὰρ ἐν ἑνὶ πνεύματι ἡμεῖς πάντες εἰς ἓν σῶμα ἐβαπτίσθημεν, εἴτε Ἰουδαῖοι εἴτε Ἕλληνες εἴτε δοῦλοι εἴτε ἐλεύθεροι, καὶ πάντες ἓν πνεῦμα ἐποτίσθημεν. Having argued in 12:4-11 that there are varieties of gifts given by the same Spirit, and having listed what they are, Paul here establishes that this diversity does not violate the unity of the body. Although the body has many members it is still one, and is so because they were all baptised into one body by the one Spirit (12:13a). Thus the unity of the body is here "not what Paul will argue *for*, but what he will argue *from*,"[48] and for Paul's argument to be effective, what he argues from must be something with which he knows the Corinthians will agree. We are therefore on safe ground in assuming that if Paul here connects baptism and the receipt of the Spirit, the Corinthians did so also.

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[48]Fee (1987), p.602. See also Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.212. The argument of chapter 14 suggests that some at Corinth have been asserting the importance of tongues to the detriment of the exercise of other gifts.

Until recently we could have ceased our discussion of 12:13 here. All major commentators agreed that this verse indicated a connection between baptism and the receipt of the Spirit.[49] However, reviving a position taken earlier by Dunn, both Fee and Witherington argue that Paul here uses the verb βαπτίζω as a metaphor for conversion.[50] The basis from which Paul argues is not that the Corinthians all received the Spirit at baptism, but that they all did so at conversion. This case is put most fully by Fee, who points out that the statement of 12:13c, that all were given the one Spirit to drink, is both clearly parallel to 12:13a, and clearly metaphorical.[51] That this alternative way of stating the same truth as contained in 12:13a is itself metaphorical "argues most strongly for a metaphorical, rather than literal, meaning for 'baptism' in the first clause."[52] He also alleges that Schnackenburg, who takes 12:13a literally, and who uses it and 6:11 to suggest a connection between baptism and receipt of the Spirit, is engaging in circular argument, since "that (the connection) is precisely what is to be doubted in both cases."[53]

Fee's arguments are not convincing. Barrett, who takes the reference to baptism in 12:13a literally, comments on the parallel clause in 13c that "the new figure is a necessary supplement to the statement that we were baptised (that is, immersed) in the Spirit; the Spirit not only surrounds us but is within us."[54] While it is parallel, this second clause does develop the meaning, and it is therefore not self-evident that because it is metaphorical, the first clause must be. It is also doubtful whether Fee's own argument is any less circular than that of those whom he criticises. The only occasions on which Paul

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[49]Barrett (1971b), p.288; Calvin (ET 1960), pp.264-65; Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.212; Godet (ET 1886), p.209; Goudge (1903), p.112; Héring (ET 1962), p.130; Moffatt (1938), p.186; Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.272.

[50]Dunn (1970), p.130; Fee (1987), p.604-06; Fee (1994), p.175-83, 853-63; Witherington (1995), p.258. One suspects that the adoption of this position has rather less to do with first century Corinth than with an anachronistic desire to vindicate Protestant positions within post-Reformation debates.

[51]Calvin (ET 1960), pp.265-66, and Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.212 n.17, both argue that 12:13c refers to the Lord's Supper, but the aorist tense of the verb suggests a single past action rather than one repeated many times.

[52]Fee (1987), p.605.

[53]Fee (1987), p.604 n.25. See Schnackenburg (1964), p.83.

[54]Barrett (1971b), p.289.

may have used βαπτίζω metaphorically are here and 15:29, and in each case this is precisely what is to be doubted. Further, although ignored by Fee et al., 12:13b, where Paul outlines the social consequences of baptism, is relevant. The slogan, 'whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free', contains very similar language to Gal. 3:26f., where Paul uses these same categories in order to assert unity in Christ on the basis of both faith (3:26) and baptism (3:27).[55] Here there can be no doubt that baptism is intended to be understood literally, since Paul says εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε (3:27), an almost identical phrase to that used at Rom. 6:3. Here, as in 1 Cor. 12:13, Paul has used the verb βαπτίζω and has outlined the consequences of baptism for ethnic and social divisions. It is simply not credible to suppose that in Gal. 3:27 Paul intends the verb literally, but in 1 Cor. 12:13 metaphorically.[56] 12:13 continues to suggest most strongly that the Corinthians did connect baptism and the receipt of the Spirit, and that, therefore, it remains credible to suggest that their understanding of the significance of baptism was influenced by the significance of initiation in the mystery cults.

9.2.2 A New Status in the Spirit - 1 Cor. 2:6-16

At 2:6, Paul's argument undergoes a sharp change of tone. For having portrayed his gospel as a God-given foolishness antithetical to all human wisdom (1:18-2:5), he makes an unexpected statement: Σοφίαν δὲ λαλοῦμεν ἐν τοῖς τελείοις. This dramatic shift in his argument has produced widespread agreement among commentators that, in 2:6-3:1, Paul adopts some of the Corinthians' own language, especially the πνευματικός - ψυχικός terminology.[57] This is significant for my own

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[55]See Horrell (1996), pp.83-84.In regard to 12:13 Fee argues that there it is the Spirit and not baptism which is the basis of unity. He is certainly correct that there one Spirit is directly equated with one body, not one baptism directly with one body. However, the one loaf of the Lord's Supper is very directly equated with one body at 10:17, and so it is difficult to see how this objection can carry any weight.

[56]Dunn (1970), pp.109-13 astonishingly attempts to argue that metaphor is what is intended in both Rom. 6:3 and in Gal. 3:27. Horrell (1996), p.83 n.126 & p.84 n.127 gives a polite, but incredulous, response on Gal. 3:27.

[57]Lührmann (1965), p.113: "Es ist deutlich, daß Paulus hier eine ihm sonst fremde Sprache spricht." Also Barrett (1971b), p.77; Horsley (1976), pp.269-70; Orr & Walther (1976), p.165; Pearson (1973), pp.38-39; Wilckens (ET 1971), p.521. Nearly all accept the pair of terms as Corinthian, although Fee (1987), p.116 & p.785 n.42 regards ψυχικός as Paul's own. Given that the two appear jointly only here

argument since, if the receipt of the Spirit at baptism did help the Corinthians to construe baptism as the gateway to a new exalted personal religious status, then 'spiritual one' is exactly the sort of self-description we might expect them to favour. It fits well with the suggestion that, at the level of practical consciousness, the Corinthians have understood the significance of baptism in terms similar to the significance of initiation within the mystery cults. Some exploration of this terminology is therefore necessary, and the following questions will be examined: (i) Is there any other vocabulary in 2:6-16 which Paul has taken over from the Corinthians? Is there an identifiable source for the terminology which the Corinthians apply to themselves? (ii) How does this terminology function for the Corinthians? In particular, what for them is the difference between a πνευματικός and a ψυχικός?

9.2.2.1 The Language of 1 Cor. 2:6-16

Whether Paul borrowed from the Corinthians terminology other than the πνευματικός - ψυχικός contrast is a difficult issue. Alongside the fact that it is only in 1 Corinthians that Paul uses the terms together, it is the complete lack of genuine parallels in other contemporary or earlier literature which makes the case for his having borrowed this pair of words so strong.[58] A contrast between the nouns πνεῦμα and ψυχή is common, but not the development of corresponding terms to designate two different types of person. The τέλειος - νήπιος terminology (2:6, 3:1) satisfies merely one of these criteria. It is only in 1 Corinthians that Paul uses these two terms together,[59] and this occurs only in contexts where the main subject under discussion is the Spirit, but the contrast between adult maturity and infanthood is a universal metaphor. It would be rash to assume on this basis that Paul's use of it specifically reflects that of the

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and in 15:44-54, and that it is πνευματικός which Paul uses elsewhere (Gal. 6:1), this argument seems ill-founded.

[58]Horsley (1976), p.270: "For this distinctive language so important for understanding the Corinthian situation ...there is no convincing terminological parallel whatsoever in contemporary comparative material."

[59]1 Cor. 13:9-11, 14:20.

Corinthians.[60] If they did use it, then we can be sure that they did not share his estimation of them as νηπίοι ἐν Χριστῷ (3:1).

As regards single words, such as μυστήριον (2:7), or single phrases such as τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ (2:10), it is difficult to see any way of determining whether they were favoured by the Corinthians as terms to describe their own religious experience. All one can do is note that Paul's use of μυστήριον is heavily concentrated in 1 Corinthians, with 6 of its 8 occurrences being found there,[61] something which may suggest that, whether or not the Corinthians used it, Paul had a specific purpose in drawing it to their attention. The only genuine parallel to τὰ βάθη τοῦ θεοῦ in the entire New Testament comes at Rev. 2:24 in the letter to the church at Thyatira, where the opponents of the author are said to know τὰ βαθέα τοῦ σατανᾶ. The introduction of Satan makes it rather clearer with John than with Paul that a specifically polemical point is being made, but it may be one based on adapting a shared idea, i.e., that Christians penetrate the deeps things of God, rather than on a specific claim from John's opponents to be able to penetrate the deep things of Satan and remain unharmed.[62] Certainly the Corinthians cannot have failed to find congenial the idea that the wisdom of the πνευματικοί extends even to the deep things of God.

Related to this question, of which other Corinthian terms Paul adopts and uses, is that of whether a source can be identified for such vocabulary. It has often been argued that the terms we have discussed are drawn from the mystery cults.[63] Such arguments have been unimpressive,[64] for the examples given of genuinely parallel usages

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[60]Rash also to assume, as does Pearson (1973), pp.28-29, that, because Philo employs the same contrast, he must be the source behind its appearance here. The term τέλειος is used widely by philosophers to denote individuals who have advanced to the pinnacle of the philosophical life. See Weiss (1910), p.74. A particularly good example of the two terms used as a contrast is provided by Polybius 5.29.2: The enemies of Philip V of Macedon hope to find a παιδίον νήπιον, but discover instead a τέλειος ἀνήρ.

[61]1 Cor. 2:1,7; 4:1; 13:2; 14:2; 15:51. The other two uses come at Rom. 11:25; 16:25.

[62]See Mounce (1978), p.105.

[63]E.g. Héring (ET 1962), p.15f.; Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.57.

[64]Nock (1972) Vol. I, p.343 concludes of early Gentile Christianity in general that "certainly there is no indication of an appropriation of pagan religious terms."

normally come from *later* Gnostic texts[65] and, as we have seen, there are good grounds for thinking that Paul is their source rather than vice versa.[66] Τέλειος provides a perfect example of this lack of corroborating evidence. We have ample proof that in the language of the mystery cults, the verb τελέω can definitely refer to initiation, as can τέλος, since an initiation is a consummation, and τελετή can refer to a ceremony of initiation. However, there is no example where τέλειος itself carries similar mystery connotations.[67] The best that can be argued is that when so many terms in the same group can carry such connotations, it would be unwise to rule it out.[68] Given that in 2:6 τέλειος stands in such obvious opposition to νήπιος in 3:1, it begins to seem fairly doubtful whether this term reflects the vocabulary of the mystery cults.

Paul's use of μυστήριον in 2:7 presents a different challenge for, as the title implies, the term obviously was part of the vocabulary of the *mystery* cults, and so the argument is only about whether or not it carries mystery cult connotations *in this context*. In a clearly argued article on the use of mystery language in the Bible, A.E. Harvey concludes not. He points out that the literal meaning of a term may be to denote a religious rite, but that from this literal meaning there may develop a rich vein of metaphorical meanings as happened, for example, with the term 'sacrifice'.[69] In the case of μυστήριον, one such development of a metaphorical meaning can be found in the Septuagint where it translates the Aramaic word *raz*. "This Aramaic word was, and remained, almost a technical term in apocalyptic for the 'secrets' of God, in the sense of

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[65]See Conzelmann (ET 1975), pp.60f. who provides an unfortunately fine example of this indiscriminate mixing of sources. In discussing μυστήριον he lists all the contexts in which it occurs and asserts, p.62, that "the common factor is their esoterism."
[66]See above, p.199.
[67]See Pearson (1973), p.27.
[68]Kennedy (1913), p.132. "When we find μυστικοῦ τέλους (=mystic rite) in Aesch. Fr. 387 (Nauck, ed.2), and the plural τέλη (e.g. Eur., Hipp., 25, τέλη μυστηρίων) constantly employed with this meaning, it is surely hazardous to say that τέλειος cannot be used with this technical connotation."
[69]Harvey (1980), p.320.

God's ultimate purposes which were revealed only to a privileged seer or a privileged people."[70]

For Harvey, this apocalyptic sense of μυστήριον is quite devoid of any direct reference to the mystery cults and, in cases such as 1 Cor. 2:7 where Paul clearly uses it to denote the revealing of God's secrets, the pursuit of such a reference is futile. Yet Harvey is content to allow that in other cases an ambiguous double meaning might suit Paul's purposes very well, and these cases include 1 Cor. 4:1, 13:2 & 14:2.[71] He is certainly right that at 2:7 Paul uses μυστήριον in a thoroughly apocalyptic sense. Here it refers not to a rite as in the mystery cults, but instead to the revelation of God's pre-ordained plan of salvation. Yet does this rule out a particular type of double meaning? If Paul is here attempting to restore what he understands to be a proper degree of emphasis on the apocalyptic content of God's wisdom, then his purpose may be to provoke the Corinthians to thought precisely by using the term in a *different* manner from that with which they might be familiar in their own environment. They think *primarily* of a rite, Paul of a revelation.[72]

To summarise, there is no substantive evidence that in 2:6-16 Paul has borrowed from the Corinthians any terminology other than the πνευματικός - ψυχικός contrast. It has been suggested that other vocabulary within the passage is borrowed from the mystery cults, but this too seems doubtful. Even if such borrowing had taken place, our doubts as to whether this other vocabulary is the Corinthians' own means that it would probably represent the influence of the mystery cults upon Paul rather than upon them. The most that can be allowed is that Paul may have sought to make a point by deliberately using the term μυστήριον in a way which runs counter to its normal usage within the mystery cults. Given my own hypothesis that the Corinthians'

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[70]Harvey (1980), p.326.
[71]Harvey (1980), pp.331-332.
[72]This is a difference of emphasis rather than an absolute distinction, since initiation rites did include 'revelations'.

understanding of the significance of baptism was influenced by the mystery cults, it is tempting to reach different conclusions. However, there is, in truth, very little in 2:6-16 to suggest that the mystery cults provide the *source* of its vocabulary. The only terminology we can be reasonably certain was the Corinthians' own is the πνευματικός - ψυχικός contrast, and it has no known contemporary parallels.

9.2.2.2 The Function of the πνευματικός - ψυχικός Terminology

Yet to expose the origins of language is not to provide a complete explanation of its meaning.[73] How it *functions* in the context under consideration is of at least equal importance. It is in its function, not its derivation, that we find grounds on which to base the suggestion that the πνευματικός - ψυχικός terminology reflects the influence of the mystery cults upon the Corinthians. When they received the Spirit at baptism (12:13) they, like initiates into the mystery cults, entered into a new exalted personal religious status. It is this self-understanding which is reflected in the designation 'spiritual one', and for which 2:6-16 provides evidence.[74] When that evidence is examined, what emerges is a consistent pattern of superiority and inferiority. The

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[73]See Martin (1995), p.xii.

[74]My argument clearly depends upon the πνευματικοί and the baptised forming identical groups. A possible objection is therefore that they are not, and that Paul and/or the Corinthians use the designation 'spiritual one' to refer to a separate class of believers. For the view that this is Paul's intention see Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.57; Godet (ET 1886), p.132; Héring (ET 1962), p.15. That this is not what Paul intends is indicated by the fact that although he labels them νήπιοι (3:1), and σαρκικοί (3:1), he does not term the Corinthians ψυχικοί. As Reitzenstein (ET 1978), p.435 comments, Paul "cannot very well use ψυχικός, for the Corinthians are after all baptised, they are ἐν Χριστῷ and thus are already partakers in the πνεῦμα but they are not yet τελείοι." Paul's words are therefore those of someone who expected all his converts to be mature and spiritual, but found them to be neither. Robertson and Plummer (1911), p.36 rightly suggest that Paul's desire is for "the raising of all such imperfect Christians to the normal and ideal standard." The designation πνευματικός is one that he would sorrowfully deny to the majority at Corinth, but it reflects what he wished them all to be. For the view that the Corinthians regarded the πνευματικοί as a separate superior class of believers see Wilckens (ET 1971), p.519: spiritual and charismatic utterance was "restricted in principle to the exclusive circle of the τέλειοι and πνευματικοί." Both Wilckens and Lührmann (1965), pp.133-40 think that Paul has here taken over a Gnostic redeemer myth and adapted it. But there is also no indication in 2:6-16 that the Corinthians would have used the terminology found there any differently from Paul. The polemic which Paul launches against them depends for its effectiveness upon their wholehearted agreement with his description of what it is to be a πνευματικός. This then makes all the more devestating his assertion in 3:1 that they are not πνευματικοί. Paul builds the Corinthians up only to knock them down. We are therefore on safe ground in using 2:6-16 as evidence for the manner in which the πνευματικός - ψυχικός terminology functioned for all the Corinthians.

πνευματικοί can know the things of God (2:12), understand spiritual teaching (2:13), and discern/examine all things without themselves being subject to the same probing (2:15). Knowing the mind of God was formerly beyond human beings, but the πνευματικοί now have the mind of Christ (2:16). In contrast, the ψυχικοί simply do not receive the things of the Spirit (2:14a). In this context this appears not a result of perversity, but of their inability. The ψυχικός simply οὐ δύναται γνῶναι (2:14),[75] and is not therefore malignant, but "merely inferior and unprivileged."[76] What determines this gulf in capabilities is the possession of the Spirit, for the things of the Spirit πνευματικῶς ἀνακρίνεται (2:14). One understands spiritual things solely by virtue of being πνευματικός oneself. It is the Spirit which reveals God's plan of salvation (2:10), and the Spirit of God which understands His thoughts (2:11) is the same Spirit ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ which has been received by the πνευματικοί (2:12).

The πνευματικός - ψυχικός terminology thus functions to assert the Corinthians' sense of their superlative personal religious distinction. They are different from the rest of humanity, who languish as mere ψυχικοί. Given that this distinction results from their possession of the Spirit, poured out on them at baptism (12:13), then the parallels with initiation are significant. There too the special experience conferred through the rite is the point of entry to a new mode of existence.[77] The passage from Plutarch which was quoted earlier carries just such a sense of distinction. Here too the initiate is set apart from the rest of humanity and granted an innate superiority. He "surveys the uninitiated, unpurified mob here on earth, the mob of living men ...herded together in mirk and deep mire."[78] Here too the uninitiated do not so much suffer from moral shortcomings, as from an ignorance which means that they "in their fear of death cling to their ills." The initiate has now risen above all this to a state

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[75]Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.60: "The nonpneumatic simply cannot understand." Fee (1987), p.116-17 denies this.
[76]Barclay (1992), p.69.
[77]See above, pp.256-57.
[78]Plutarch, *fr.*168. See above pp.246-47.

characterised by perfection and freedom, able to "converse with pure and holy men" just as Paul knew that he would be able to teach πνευματικοί in a manner that involved πνευματικοῖς πνευματικὰ συγκρίνοντες (2:13). Both baptism and initiation confer the ability to see and to hear (2:9) that which is incomprehensible to those who have not shared the experiences they offer.

The evidence provided by 1 Cor. 2:6-16 thus fits well with my suggestion that it is at the level of practical consciousness that the Corinthians' understanding of baptism has been influenced by the mystery cults. Direct influence at a discursive level is unlikely given that permanent possession by the Spirit lacks clear parallels within Graeco-Roman religion. Further, the πνευματικός - ψυχικός contrast, the only vocabulary in the passage which can securely be attributed to the Corinthians, is not derived from the mystery cults. Yet the Corinthians do describe themselves as πνευματικοί, a term which functions to express a sense of exalted personal religious status. This suggests that they construe their identity, as ones filled by the Spirit, in ways similar to those who have been initiated into the mystery cults. That the Spirit was received at baptism (12:13), and that baptism is therefore the gateway to this new exalted status, further strengthens the plausibility of this suggestion. For the Corinthians, the same implicit rules and resources of social life operate in relation to baptism as to initiation. It remains to test this hypothesis in relation to those passages in 1 Corinthians where baptism itself is discussed (1:10-17, 15:29).

9.3 Baptism: The Tie that Binds

9.3.1 Baptism and the Creation of 'Parties' - 1 Cor. 1:10-17

In these verses Paul rebukes the Corinthians for factionalism, criticising their tendency to identify themselves with one or other prominent figure within early Christianity (1:12). Paul seems to associate such divisions with baptism, asking if the Corinthians had been baptised into his name (1:13c) and giving thanks that he had

baptised so few at Corinth ἵνα μή τις εἴπῃ ὅτι εἰς τὸ ἐμον ὄνομα ἐβαπτίσθητε (1:15). The standing of the person by whom one had been baptised therefore seems to have been a source of prestige and division among the Corinthians. Many have argued that this reflects the influence of the mystery cults, where initiation was held to create a special tie between the initiate and the priest performing the rite.[79] Given that there is evidence of the creation of such a special bond from several cults this suggestion is not, like so many made by the History of Religions School, based on unsupported generalisations about the mysteries. It has a firm foundation.[80] The test which it faces is simply therefore that of relevance to the situation at Corinth. Does the suggestion of influence from the mystery cults cohere with all the information provided by Paul in 1:10-17?

9.3.1.1 Accounting for Paul's Rhetoric

If the Spirit was received at baptism, then there would certainly be every reason for the Corinthians to hold in particular esteem the baptiser who had been its channel.[81] Paul seems to fear that had he personally baptised a greater number, they

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[79]Barrett (1971b), p.47; Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.35; Héring (ET 1962), p.7; Lietzmann (1969), p.8; Moffatt (1938), p.11; Wedderburn (1987b), pp.248-49; Weiss (1910), p.19. Of course, I would not agree with the majority of these interpreters that this belief indicates the Corinthians to have held a magical view of the sacraments. I would suspect rather that the relationship established between those baptised and their baptisers to have been one of loyalty and support in return for patronage.

[80]Merkelbach (1995), p.168 says of this special bond that "diese Symbolik findet sich in vielen Kulten." In relation to Isis we find Mithras, the priest of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses*, referred to by Lucius as 'father', himself emphasising that the goddess determined which priest initiated which candidate. See XI.25,21. We also have reference in inscriptions to the 'fathers' of Isiac collegia, see SIRIS 384, 698 (some also include 438 and 439, but Vidman (1970), pp.88-89, considers them to belong to Mithraism). For the same in the cult of Cybele, see CCCA Vol.III, 246, 404, 411. In the cult of Mithras, those who achieved the highest grade were termed 'fathers'. Here the references in inscriptions are so extensive that those interested should consult the indices of CIMRM. Vermaseren (1963), p.153 says of one who has reached this grade, "he is a Father to his initiates ...and guards over the interests of his community (*defensor*) ...he ...has been chosen by his fellow initiates (*consacranei syndexi*) as the lawful Father (*pater nominus* - πατὴρ νόμιμος τῶν τελετῶν τοῦ θεοῦ) at the mysteries and as such he carries the responsibility for dispensing initiation to the different grades and for accepting new members." In the cult of Dionysus, all those conducting initiations in Egypt were required by Ptolemy IV Philopater to register not only the name of the person who had initiated them, but also the names of the previous two generations of initiators. See Hunt & Edgar (1934), no. 208. Finally, Tertullian twice, when referring to the mysteries in general rather than those of any specific cult, speaks of the father of the rites of initiation. See *Apology* 8, *Ad. Nat.* 1.7.23.

[81]Wedderburn (1987b), p.248 implies that the analogy of initiation into the mystery cults and the receipt of the Spirit by laying on of hands reinforced each other.

would have become partisans of the group which used him as its mascot (1:12,14). However, there are difficulties with this argument. Of the four names mentioned in 1:12, we can only be sure that two of them had the opportunity to baptise anyone in Corinth. Paul and Apollos certainly visited Corinth, but Christ certainly did not, and we have no way of knowing whether Peter had been there.[82] If there are those who say Ἐγὼ δέ Κηφᾶ, Ἐγὼ δὲ Χριστοῦ (1:12),[83] how can they do so on the basis of a special bond between themselves and the person who baptised them? Further, would not the Paul 'party' have been remarkably small if becoming part of it depended upon having been baptised by him? Neither can one sensibly suggest that, although they did not conduct the ceremonies, it was the 'party' mascots into whose name individuals were baptised, for the rhetorical question εἰς τὸ ὄνομα Παύλου ἐβαπτίσθητε; (1:13c) depends for its force entirely upon the certainty that the answer must be negative.

In the face of these difficulties one might be tempted to abandon altogether the idea of a special bond between the baptised and their baptisers. On this view, the thankfulness of vv.14-15 is not a reflection of any actual danger but merely a rhetorical ploy on Paul's part, designed to illustrate the absurdity of their factionalism. "Was Paul skittish here, as though by now he would put nothing beyond the Corinthian believers?"[84] Certainly the anxiety that some might claim to have been baptised into Paul's own name (1:15) does seem a rhetorical exaggeration for, as we have already noted, the question of 1:13 relies for its force on the recognition that they have all indeed been baptised in the name of Christ. Does baptism therefore have no part in their divisions? One doubts it, for then the contents of vv.14-17 seem simply excessive. Why the concern on Paul's part to remember exactly who it was he had baptised in Corinth,

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[82]Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.35n.36 sees 1:10-17 as evidence that Peter must have been to Corinth, but the mention of a Christ 'party' renders this a false deduction.

[83]This inclusion of a Christ 'party' has given rise to no end of speculation as to its nature. What does Paul mean by accusing those who say they belong to Christ of factionalism when he himself demands that Christ be the basis of their unity (1:13)? Perhaps what he means is just that, i.e., he believes that there are those who have turned even Christ himself into a cause of division by asserting that they have a closer connection to him than others.

[84]Fee (1987), p.62.

and not to leave anyone out (1:14,16)? Why the insistence that to baptise is not the essence of his commission from Christ (1:17)? If such statements do not reflect a genuine anxiety over the Corinthians' understanding of baptism then they are redundant. The question of 1:13c alone would have sufficed to make Paul's point. Further, even a rhetorical exaggeration requires some basis from which to exaggerate, unless it is itself to lack all force. The fear that Corinthians would say that they were baptised in the name of Paul is not a real one, but it does provide a caution as to where their present attitudes towards baptism could lead. Paul is presenting the Corinthians with the logical conclusion to be drawn from what they do say, but offering it in the expectation that the Corinthians will recognise its undesirability. 'Look where you are heading,' says Paul, 'it would be better to change direction now.'

9.3.1.2 'Party' Leaders as Baptisers

We may therefore agree with Fee that "it is possible - probable, it would seem to me - that 'who baptised whom' was part of their divisions."[85] What remains to be clarified is how this relates to the 'parties' of 1:12. If it was not the 'party' mascots who actually did the baptising, how was 'who baptised whom' part of the Corinthians' divisions? What role did the creation of a special bond between baptised and baptisers fulfil? The key to answering these questions lies in discerning the nature of the 'parties'. As has already been suggested (**8.2.2**), the 'parties' do not seem to represent distinct theological positions.[86] Instead, they are led by local Christians who legitimate their own power by appealing to renowned figures in the wider church. Exploiting their relatively greater wealth and status, these local leaders draw groups of poorer Christians into allegiance to them and compete with each other for honour.

If this picture is right, then it is easy to see how baptism could have fitted into it. By creating a close bond between the baptised and the one who baptised

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[85]Fee (1987), p.63.
[86]See pp.216-17.

them, baptism drew people into one 'party' or another right from the moment they joined the church. When this began to happen in the Corinthian church is not clear. Its overt expression probably dates from after Paul's departure, but it could also be that its seeds were sown while he was still there. "Möglich ist ...daß, nachdem einige Getaufte da waren, es diesen überlassen blieb, andere in ihren Kreis aufzunehmen."[87] Given that in 1:14 Paul says that he baptised Crispus, probably the erstwhile synagogue ruler (Acts 18:8), and Gaius, an individual with a home large enough to be ὁ ξένος μου καὶ ὅλης τῆς ἐκκλησίας (Rom. 16:23), there would seem to be something of a match between the social status of those whom Paul baptised, and the profile of the local 'party' leaders provided by Welborn. To suggest that these two specific individuals were therefore local 'party' leaders would be to overstate the case, but what we know of them does help us to paint a credible picture of how the 'parties' of 1:12 developed.

So too does Paul's sudden recall that he had baptised the whole household of Stephanas (1:16). "The baptism of households offers a further clue as to how divisions developed; the head of the household thereby had a ready-made group of supporters. This group could expand to include other slaves, freedmen, hired labourers, business associates - the whole *clientela*."[88] Thus, the creation of a special bond between baptised and baptiser did indeed play a part in the formation of the 'parties' of the Corinthian church, and the creation of that special bond betrays an understanding of baptism which reflects the influence of the understanding of initiation found in the mystery cults. What is perhaps especially fascinating about 1:10-17 is the way in which this influence feeds into a situation also shaped by other factors in the social environment of the Corinthians. It was the combination of their particular view of baptism with

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[87]Weiss (1910), p.21. Chrysostom (ET 1839), p.27 argues that Paul attacks "the folly of those who were puffed up at having been baptisers". Another possibility is, as Weiss acknowledges, that baptisms were carried out by Paul's assistants, whom Acts 18:5 suggests were Silas and Timothy.

[88]Horrell (1996), p.117, in part quoting Welborn (1987), p.100. While therefore not agreeing with Dahl's suggestion that the quarrels at Corinth were caused by the question of which notable figure in the wider church to write to for advice (Peter, Paul, Apollos etc.), it is entirely credible that, in a situation where factions existed, this became a contentious issue. See Dahl (1967),p.325.

behaviour expressing the assumptions of Graeco-Roman society about politics, patronage, rhetoric etc. which moulded the factionalism of the Corinthian church. Our exploration of 1:10-17 therefore supports the suggestion that to paint a credible picture of the impact of their social and religious context upon the Corinthians' interpretation of their Christian faith requires a substantial palette (**7.4**). The significance of initiation into the mystery cults is an important influence upon the practical consciousness of the Corinthians, but far from the only one.

9.3.2 Baptism for the Dead - 1 Cor. 15:29

Ἐπεὶ τί ποιήσουσιν οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι ὑπὲρ τῶν νεκρῶν; εἰ ὅλως νεκροὶ οὐκ ἐγείρονται, τί καὶ βαπτίζονται ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν; This most difficult of verses has spawned a vast array of proposed solutions,[89] none of which has succeeded in convincing a majority of scholars. Perhaps none is likely to do so, and Fee's counsel of despair is a realistic one: "The best one can do in terms of particulars is point out what appear to be the more viable options, but finally to admit to ignorance."[90] However, even determining what is viable raises several groups of questions, each of which we shall examine in turn. (i) Do Paul's words in 15:29 necessarily imply a rite of vicarious baptism? Are there credible alternative explanations? (ii) Whatever Paul means, how does this verse relate to the wider issues at stake between himself and the Corinthians? Are those who practise baptism for the dead amongst those who say that there is no resurrection of the dead (15:12), or are they a different group? (iii) If the Corinthians did literally baptise on behalf of the dead, what could such a rite have meant for them? Why is there no other contemporary evidence for the practice?

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[89]Estimates of the number range from several tens to hundreds. See Fee (1987), p.762; Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.276 n.120.

[90]Fee (1987), p.763. What follows is therefore inevitably speculative. One cannot, as in happier circumstances, attempt to distinguish between the speculative and the probable, but merely between conceivable and inconceivable speculation.

9.3.2.1 Alternatives to Vicarious Baptism

Since Foschini's comprehensive review articles half a century ago,[91] there have been three significant attempts to provide meanings for 15:29 which do not involve conceding an actual vicarious baptism.[92] The only one of these which understands Paul's words literally is that of Raeder. Taking ὑπέρ to mean 'because of,' she proposes that the dead in v.29a are deceased Christians, and those baptised their surviving relatives who receive baptism in the hope of joining their loved ones at the resurrection.[93] However, ingenious as this is, it is hard to see why Paul should single out this group, as for him all baptisms were a pledge of future resurrection (Rom. 6:5). He might as well have said that if the resurrection of the dead was denied then there was no point in any baptism, especially as he has already argued that if the dead are not raised then Christ has not been raised (15:16), implying that the entire Christian faith is therefore invalid.

Others have sought explanations which take Paul's words metaphorically. The best attempt has been made by Joel White, who rejects the widely held view that 15:29 represents an *ad hominem* argument. White instead seeks to integrate this verse with what follows in 15:30-32, where Paul points out that the present sufferings of the apostles will be pointless if there is no resurrection of the dead. Apostolic suffering is under discussion in 15:29 also, where τῶν νεκρῶν refers to the apostles.[94] This ties in with Paul's statement that καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποθνῄσκω (15:31), and leaves οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι of 15:29a as nothing more problematic than those who

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[91]Foschini (1950-51).

[92]Other attempts include O'Neill (1980), Reaume (1995).

[93]See Raeder (1955). Also Jeremias (1955).

[94]Murphy-O'Connor (1981) grants a similar integrating function to the concept of apostolic suffering but, drawing on a rare classical usage of the verb, takes οἱ βαπτιζόμενοι as a metaphorical reference to the apostles. 15:29a should therefore read 'What will they do who are being destroyed (i.e., the apostles) on account of (the resurrection of) the dead.' This translation faces grammatical difficulties. Paul does not use βαπτίζω metaphorically elsewhere. See **9.2.1**. Also, the elision in v.29a required by Murphy-O'Connor's translation is dubious. Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.359: "If St. Paul had wanted to abbreviate ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀναστάσεως τῶν νεκρῶν, he would have left out τῶν νεκρῶν, not τῆς ἀναστάσεως."

have become Christians being baptised at the outset of their Christian lives. Thus, White's translation of 15:29 reads "Otherwise what will those do who are being baptised on account of the dead (that is, the dead, figuratively speaking; that is, the apostles)? For if truly dead persons are not raised, why at all are people being baptised on account of them (that is, the apostles)?"[95] Such an accusation, i.e., that some are baptised on account of the apostles, fits into the attitude towards baptism which we saw displayed at 1:10-17. "Certain groups in Corinth were brought to faith and baptised 'on account of' some of the apostles, especially Paul and Apollos, to whom they subsequently and quite naturally felt an affinity, but their preferences resulted in the development of competitive allegiances to one or other of the apostles ...if there is no resurrection from the dead, then the Corinthians' allegiances to the apostles under whose ministries, respectively, they were converted is all the more ludicrous since the apostles, figuratively speaking, are already dead."[96]

It is tempting to accept this argument. It turns 15:29 into another reference to the situation created by the close bond between baptised and baptiser (1:10-17), once again reflecting the influence of the mystery cults upon the Corinthians' practical consciousness. Yet one fears that there are weaknesses which must ultimately overwhelm it. Although 15:29 makes an *ad hominem* point, one doubts that it is as out of place in the structure of Paul's wider argument as White alleges. In 15:1-28 Paul seeks to establish the necessity of faith in the resurrection of the dead, in 15:35-58 he deals with the nature of the body that the resurrected will enjoy and, in the interlude, he draws attention to the consequences of a denial of the resurrection of the dead for the Corinthians' present conduct, i.e., baptism on behalf of the dead, and then for his own, i.e., enduring apostolic suffering, both of which will be rendered pointless (15:29-34). It is hard to see any reason why this structure requires that the content of 15:29 be the

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[95]White, J. (1997), p.494. As in Murphy-O'Connor's proposal, this translation takes the ὅλως in 29b to qualify νεκροὶ rather than ἐγείρονται. Thus, the dead in 29a are metaphorical, those in 29b literal.
[96]White, J. (1997), p.498.

same as that of 15:30-32. A further objection is that Paul never refers to the apostles as 'the dead' elsewhere. Although the theme of apostolic suffering is a strong one in the Corinthian correspondence, it appears to be a point of contention between Paul and his readers (4:8f.). They would not have wanted to refer to the apostles as 'the dead.' If Paul had meant what White alleges, surely he would have found it necessary to explain himself rather more clearly if his questions in 15:29 were not to receive the puzzled response, 'But we were not baptised on behalf of the dead.'[97] Finally, White's translation requires that the αὐτῶν of v.29c refer not to the literal dead in the same sentence, but to the metaphorical dead of the previous one, something that seems decidedly forced.[98] Even this best of attempts to provide an alternative explanation to vicarious baptism fails. Paul intends his words literally.

9.3.2.2 Baptism for the Dead and Resurrection

If 15:29 does refer to vicarious baptism, then the point Paul is trying make is clear enough. In his view the practice makes no sense unless there is a resurrection from the dead. He is highlighting what he regards as Corinthian inconsistency. Yet this is in itself puzzling. Why would those who deny the resurrection of the dead wish to perform rituals on their behalf at all? The inconsistency seems so obvious and overwhelming that one is hard-pressed to imagine how it could have escaped the attention of the Corinthians themselves. One might therefore suggest that those referred to in 15:29 are a different group from those referred to in 15:12, but in that case why does Paul appear to be arguing against the same target, i.e., denial of the resurrection of the dead? The fact that another group within the church did something which implied a belief in the resurrection of the dead would scarcely be a good argument to have employed against those who denied it. This latter group could simply have

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[97]Thus Paul's argument is rendered convoluted and opaque. This is a general problem with all attempts to find an alternative explanation to a literal vicarious baptism. Would these alternatives have occurred to anyone if the apparently plain meaning of Paul's words were not felt to cause so many historical and theological difficulties?

[98]See White, J. (1997), p.494 n.44 for his attempt to cope with this problem.

responded that the practice was sadly misguided. Further, to argue that Paul misunderstood what was being said about the resurrection at Corinth is a desperate proposal given that he had Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus on hand to provide him with information (16:17). We require a solution which explains why the practice of baptism on behalf of the dead appeared to Paul inconsistent with a denial of the resurrection of the dead, yet which simultaneously also explains why it did not appear so to the Corinthians.

This criterion is met by the suggestion that although the Corinthians did not believe that death was the end, they did have difficulty in accepting the desirability of continued bodily existence. For those who thought of themselves as πνευματικοί, it was a post-death spiritual existence that they looked forward to, not a bodily one. "Thus for them life in the Spirit meant a final ridding oneself of the body, not because it was evil but because it was inferior and beneath them."[99] Paul's talk of a σῶμα πνευματικόν is an attempt to convince them that a continued bodily existence can fulfil their expectations. Against this view some pit 15:19,[100] which argues that if Christ has not been raised then there is hope only for this life. However, this statement is the climax of a section in which Paul seeks to demonstrate that the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of the dead are inextricably linked. Acceptance of one implies acceptance of the other, denial of one denial of the other. Paul is thus exploiting to his own advantage the common ground of belief in the resurrection of Christ (15:1-2) as the basis of hope for life after death, and 15:19 is a statement of what Paul sees as the *consequence* of the Corinthians' position. Denial of the resurrection of the dead implies denial of the resurrection of Christ which, in turn, implies denial of any possible after-life, and so οἱ κοιμηθέντες ἐν Χριστῷ ἀπώλοντο (15:18). Paul's argument is

[99]Fee (1987), p.715. See also Lietzmann (1969), p.79; Barclay (1992), p.63; Martin (1995), p.105-108; Wedderburn (1987b), pp.6-37. Wedderburn, p.30, argues that the Corinthians regarded the body as "something transitory and therefore unimportant." His discussion, and those of Barclay and Martin, also serve to counter the view that the Corinthians believed the resurrection already to have taken place.
[100]E.g. Foschini (1950-51), pp.263-64.

structured in such a way as to eliminate any possibilities other than non-existence or bodily resurrection.[101] The Corinthians must choose one or the other, and if this is so, then the practice of baptism on behalf of the dead makes no sense when performed by those who deny the resurrection. This is the inconsistency to which Paul refers but which, from the perspective of those who reject the terms of the choice laid out by Paul, does not exist. They can deny the resurrection of the dead, but practise baptism on behalf of the dead, whom they believe enjoy a continued, but non-bodily, existence.

9.3.2.3 Vicarious Baptism

Having established that 15:29 probably refers to vicarious baptism, and having suggested that it does so as part of an argument directed against belief in a non-bodily after-life, it remains to attempt some explanation of the details of the situation. What might motivate the Corinthians to undertake such a practice? One possible explanation is that the dead on whose behalf others received baptism were household members who had died before hearing the gospel.[102] Although it has been expressed in different ways, there have certainly been other cases in Christian history where converts have displayed anxiety as to the eternal destiny of their unconverted dead.[103] Such a suggestion would also explain the lack of any other contemporary evidence for the rite.[104] Any who had been alive when Paul first arrived in Corinth would have had the

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[101]Paul's vocabulary itself - ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν, ἐγείρειν ἐκ νεκρῶν - probably carried the specific connotation of *bodily* resurrection. See Martin (1995), p.122; Wedderburn (1987b), pp.181-83.
[102]Fee (1987), p.767 also sees deceased household members as one of the likeliest possible groups on whose behalf some Corinthians might be baptised. Witherington (1995), p.305 n.58 suggests something similar when he refers to "ancestors who have never heard the gospel." Might this suggestion also go some way towards explaining Paul's failure to condemn the practice, something which has always puzzled commentators? For him, does the baptism of deceased household members fall within a similar logic to that found in 7:14 where he asserts that unbelieving spouses and children are sanctified by their relationship with a believer? See Schweitzer (ET 1931), p.285 for the suggestion that it could.
[103]Fletcher (1997), pp.405-06 records that, about 960 CE, Harold of Denmark had his parents' remains removed from their pagan burial mounds and re-interred inside his new church.
[104]White, J. (1997), p.490 n.14: "Later references to baptism for the dead in Marcionite or Gnostic circles are irrelevant; they are all influenced by our text."

opportunity to hear for themselves, and so one 'round' of baptisms on behalf of the dead might provide for all the deceased considered eligible to benefit.[105]

Yet although this might explain the identity of the dead on whose behalf some Corinthians were baptised, it does not explain how those who underwent vicarious baptism thought it would help the deceased.[106] On this point the word 'magic' is once again much in evidence among scholars, as is mention of the mystery cults.[107] Again, while regarding the influence of the mystery cults as significant, one doubts that the introduction of the term 'magic' is helpful, especially as we do not know how those who undertook the rite believed it to work. If we are right that the attitude towards death displayed in the mystery cults was rather more experimental than has usually been supposed,[108] then those baptised on behalf of the dead may have approached the rite in this manner. They reasoned that there was nothing to be lost by seeking, on behalf of deceased members of their households, the aid of the God who poured out the Spirit at baptism. If so, their innovation would not be a tribute to some mechanistic view of the rite of baptism, but rather to the vitality of the religious experience which they associated with it. The God who at baptism had very publicly declared them amongst the πνευματικοί might well be one whose power was sufficient to grant such exalted status and blessedness to the dead, as well as to the living. If He was prepared to grant them His power and patronage, then why not their deceased loved ones?

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[105]I therefore disagree with DeMaris (1995b), who views baptism on behalf of the dead as a funerary rite designed to ease the transition of the newly dead from this world to the next. DeMaris suggests that the practice arose in Corinth partly because we find there, in the first century, Greek and Roman funerary practices appearing side by side, and that it disappeared because Greek inhumation finally altogether replaced Roman cremation. But how, even speculatively, are we to discern the connections between this archaeological datum and baptism for the dead? For further criticism of DeMaris, see White, J. (1997), p.490 n.15.

[106]The following suggestion implies that Paul's reasons for finding baptism for the dead tolerable, and the Corinthians' motivation in undertaking it were rather different, and reflect the divergence in attitude towards the 'sacraments' discussed above. See **9.1.2**. Paul's participatory logic makes it possible for him to tolerate the rite in certain circumstances (see p.277 n.102), but it is generated amongst the Corinthians by another, quite different pattern of thought.

[107]Barrett (1971b), p.364; Chow (1992), p.160; Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.276; Fee (1987), p.767; Wedderburn (1987b), p.288.

[108]See above, pp.250-51.

Baptism for the dead is therefore best seen as some sort of intercessory rite, prompted by anxiety as to the fate of household members who had died apart from Christ. While the mystery cults have no specific rites for the dead which can be adduced as parallels,[109] there are two reasons why the influence of initiation on the Corinthians' understanding of baptism as a whole may have helped to prompt its application to the dead. One is the concept of symbolic death and rebirth attached to initiation.[110] This may have made baptism appear a peculiarly appropriate rite to offer on behalf of the dead. It is certainly easier to see how this rather looser, more general, concept of coming through death to life might stimulate such a development than it is to see how it might result from Paul's more specific baptismal theology of dying and rising with Christ. Here there is a strong emphasis on a future bodily resurrection (Rom. 6:5,8) which the Corinthians would not have found congenial. The second is the whole pattern of votive religion on which initiation into the mysteries formed a variation.[111] Although there is nothing to suggest that baptism for the dead involved an offering, such an attempt to secure the protection and patronage of the deity mirrors the basic concern of votive religion. In this context, the comments of Chow on 15:29 are suggestive.[112] He points to the existence within Graeco-Roman religion of sacrifices for the dead conducted by public officials performing a priestly role. Those in the Corinthian church who occupied, and aspired to, positions of leadership, may well have perceived officiating at such a ceremony to be prestigious. This suggestion is highly speculative, but it does accord with our understanding, drawn from 1:10-17, that 'who baptised whom' contributed to the

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[109]Wedderburn (1987b), pp.289-90 sets out evidence concerning rites for the dead, although as he freely admits, these are not baptisms or even washings. See Plato, *Resp.* 2.364E - 365A, and *Orph. Fr.* 232. More interestingly, Wild (1981), pp.102-03, 123-26 draws attention to a series of funerary inscriptions employing the formula 'May Osiris give you cool water.' He suspects, p.103, that libations of Nile water were poured out for the dead, and that Nile water was believed to be the source "not only of a bountiful earthly life but also a joyous life beyond the grave." However, as the earliest of these inscriptions dates from the end of the first century CE, it would be unwise to employ them as evidence for baptism on behalf of the dead in mid-century Corinth.

[110]See above, p.252 n.32.

[111]Burkert (1987), p.15: "The practice of personal initiation, in motivation and function, was largely parallel to votive practice and should be seen against this background as a new form in a similar quest for salvation." See above, pp.245-46.

[112]Chow (1992), pp.157-66.

factionalism of the Corinthian church. One can imagine that those who undertook the baptisms of converts might also do the same for their dead, thereby entwining the divine patronage sought by means of the rite with their own human patronage, so that the former was accessed through the latter.

9.4 Conclusions

Having considered those texts in 1 Corinthians which discuss baptism, we are now in a position to draw some conclusions. In what follows, (i) - (ii) clarify the nature of the mystery cults and therefore also the nature of their potential to influence either Paul or the Corinthians, (iii) - (vi) trace the impact of initiation upon the practical consciousness which the Corinthians display in relation to baptism:

(i) The History of Religions School misunderstood the potential influence of the mystery cults upon early Gentile Christianity. Far from involving a share in the sufferings of a dying and rising deity, initiation was understood as a granting of the power and protection of the deity. In return for continued service and devotion, the deity became the patron of the individual concerned, typically promising success in this life, longevity beyond the years appointed by fortune, and perhaps also blessedness in the life to come.

(ii) Consequently, the influence of the mystery cults upon early Gentile Christianity cannot account for those elements of Paul's sacramental theology which speak of union with Christ, and of baptism as dying with him in order also to rise with him. Neither can the influence of the mystery cults be held to account for the supposed 'magical sacramentalism' of the Corinthians (see **Appendix 3**), which has often been regarded as an exaggerated and false deduction from the 'mystery cult element' in Paul's own thought.

(iii) The Corinthians in fact understand their relationship with Christ in the terms outlined at point (i), that is, those typical of the relationship between deity and initiate in the mystery cults. In both cases the point of entry to such a relationship is a rite, on the one hand baptism, on the other initiation. The Corinthians understand the significance of baptism in a parallel way to that of initiation, construing it as an extraordinary experience of the divine which grants the individual undergoing it a new exalted religious status.

(iv) The Corinthians understand baptism primarily in terms of experience because it was at baptism that they received the Spirit. Despite arguments to the contrary, the evidence of 1 Cor. 12:13 confirms this connection between baptism and the receipt of the Spirit. Similarly, 1 Cor. 2:6-16, with its contrast between those who are πνευματικοί and those who are ψυχικοί, demonstrates that the Corinthians did indeed believe themselves to have received a new exalted religious status. Whereas Paul perceives this confidence as misplaced, the Corinthians see no reason to suppose that God might be about to withdraw from them his protection and patronage.

(v) As with initiation in the mystery cults, 1 Cor. 1:10-17 suggests that the Corinthians believe baptism to create a special bond between the person baptised and the one who baptises. Just as baptism brings the convert into a relationship with God where He grants the individual His power and protection, so at Corinth it brings the convert into a relationship with a 'party' leader constructed on a similar basis.

(vi) The enduring puzzle that is 1 Cor. 15:29 permits of no confident conclusions, but it may be that 'baptism on behalf of the dead' reflects a similar interweaving of divine and human patronage. Its existence is a tribute not to any magical view of the sacraments held by the Corinthians, but to the vitality of the religious

experience which they associate with baptism, and to their belief in the effectiveness of the power and protection of their God.

(vii) The credibility of conclusions (i) - (vi) is enhanced by archaeological evidence which demonstrates the presence of the mystery cults at Corinth in the mid-first century CE. They were a significant presence in the social and religious environment of the Corinthian Christians.

9.5 Excursus - The Mystery Cults in First Century Corinth[113]

It seems that several mystery cults flourished in Corinth during the early years of its church. Detailed evidence is available for three of them, that of Demeter and Kore, that of a local hero Palaimon/Melikertes, and that of Isis. The first of these was situated at Corinth itself, the second and the third at Isthmia and Kenchreai respectively, both a handful of miles to the east. Each of them warrants investigation in its own right, but something must also be said about the collective status of mystery cults within Corinthian religion since some scholars have suggested that it was low. It is true that no temple in the central forum area, the scene of impressive first century temple-building projects, was dedicated to a mystery deity.[114] Donald Engels regards this as evidence that the elite of the city were not much interested in the mystery cults and that they were the preserve of the poor.[115] Dennis E. Smith is thinking along the same lines when he suggests that the establishment of a small shrine to Sarapis in two shops in the South Stoa during the late second century reflects a lower class response to this

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[113]The only other recent survey of the archaeological evidence for the presence of the mystery cults in first century is that provided by Yeo (1995), pp.101-19. However, without explaining why Yeo includes the cults of several non-mystery deities in his discussion.

[114]The heaviest investment was in the imperial cult. The majority of dedications were to it, and Claudius' conquest of Britain was honoured with its own cult. See Engels (1990), pp.101-02 and Chow (1992), pp.61,46 respectively. Williams, C.K. (1987b), p.29 correlates the archaeological evidence with Pausanias in order to argue that Temple E, the largest new temple in the forum area, was dedicated to Octavia.

[115]See Engels (1990), pp.106-107.

exclusion.[116] However, such interpretations seem ill-founded. Whatever the status of the adherents of the mystery cults, it may simply be that locations in the forum area were reserved for cults of a less personal and a more public and civic nature.

The sacking of Greek Corinth by the Romans in 146 BCE, and its subsequent refounding as a Roman colony in 44 BCE, meant that new temple buildings were needed. All our evidence suggests that although no attempt was made to retain the design or architectural style of the temples of Greek Corinth,[117] or to recreate earlier Greek ritual, the temples of the Roman city were built on the same sites whenever possible.[118] In the case of those temples dedicated to mystery deities which we know existed, this is exactly what we find. The sanctuary of Demeter and Kore was located with the help of Pausanias some distance along the road to Acrocorinth,[119] and, upon excavation, proved to have been used in both periods of the city's history. Pausanias also placed the sanctuaries of Isis and Sarapis on the same roadside a little nearer to the city. Although no attempt has been made to definitely locate or excavate these temples, a small marble tripod base, of the second or third century BCE, dedicated to Isis, has been found in a manhole 400 metres down the slope from the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore.[120] Nancy Bookidis and Ronald Stroud are confident that, along with other pieces of circumstantial evidence, this find indicates the location of the temples.[121] If they are correct, then the worship of these deities in the Roman period also took place on the

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[116]See Smith (1977), p.228.
[117]Williams, C.K. (1987b), p.26. As distinct from architectural style, the building techniques found in first century Corinth reflect neither Italian methods nor those of Hellenistic Corinth, but those of contemporary Athens. See Haskell (1982), p.269.
[118]Williams, C.K. (1987b), p.26,32. An example of a change in ritual can be found in the cult of Aphrodite. Along with Poseidon, she is the deity featured most often on the coins of Roman Corinth, but the image of her found there suggests a cult statue on the Acrocorinth different in form from that of the Hellenistic period. The Roman Aphrodite uses her shield as a mirror to reflect her beauty, i.e., the accent has moved away from her earlier role as warrior protectress of the city and more exclusively onto her position as goddess of love. See Gadberry (1992) and Soles (1982).
[119]Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece,* 2.4.6-7.
[120]Smith (1977), pp.216-218.
[121]Bookidis and Stroud (1997), pp.5-6.

same sites as it had done in the Hellenistic period. Exclusion of the mystery cults from the forum area of the city as a result of aristocratic disdain therefore seems unlikely.[122]

9.5.1 The Sanctuary of Demeter and Kore[123]

This site has been extensively and carefully excavated during the last few decades, and evidence found of occupation as far back as the eleventh century BCE.[124] The first definite evidence of cultic activity appears in the seventh century BCE,[125] with the temple remaining in use down to the end of the fourth century CE. We are thus dealing with a site of worship used as such for at least 1100 years. Looked at in this way the story of the sanctuary is one of impressive and massive continuity, but closer inspection significantly alters that picture. There was a substantial break in occupation following the sack of Corinth by the Romans in 146 BCE, and all are agreed that, while the buildings were not destroyed, they fell into complete disuse. What happened subsequent to the re-founding of the city as a Roman colony in 44 BCE is far less clear. Kathleen Slane, the excavation's pottery expert, believes that the site was not reoccupied until the middle of the first century CE,[126] but Bookidis and Stroud, authors of the official volume on topography and architecture, date the reoccupation to early in the first century CE.[127] They base their position on the discovery of a small amount of early Roman pottery, some clearly ritualistic, and of 30 bronze coins which date from the reign of Augustus to that of Galba, but which predominantly belong to Augustus and Tiberius. Slane believes that the pottery "probably represents pieces casually dropped in the area

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[122]Especially given that the centre of Corinth may have been on a different site in the Hellenistic period. Williams, C.K. (1987a), p.474: "From the evidence that now exists, one might strongly argue that the Greek centre of the city has not been found."

[123]One assumes in the absence of evidence to the contrary that no initiations into this cult took place at Corinth. However, the proximity of Eleusis would have made it relatively easy for Corinthian devotees of Demeter to become initiates. Although there is no direct evidence to support it, the idea of a θίασος of initiates seems not unreasonable.

[124]Bookidis (1974), p.270.

[125]DeMaris (1995a), p.107.

[126]See Slane (1990), pp.4-5.

[127]See Bookidis and Stroud (1997), pp.273-74.

by passers-by,"[128] and presumably feels that the coins alone are an insufficient basis on which to posit a resumption of worship.

Despite this disagreement, it appears that, even if the sanctuary was back in use as a place of worship before the mid-first century, the early years of the Corinthian church saw a quickening of activity at the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore. For the first time since the re-founding of Corinth, there is evidence of building work,[129] and the quantity of finds increases dramatically. In relation to the entire Roman period, there is a preponderance of pottery from the second half of the first century in general, and from the third quarter of it in particular. This is due to "the construction fills and contemporary materials associated with the three buildings on the Upper Terrace and Building K-L:21-22 on the Lower Terrace."[130] In other words, the middle of the first century saw the start of a considerable building programme. This may indicate the first resumption of worship at the site but, even if this had happened earlier, it is in the middle of the first century that considerable resources begin to be invested in the cult of Demeter and Kore.

Perhaps not surprisingly after such lengthy disuse, the evidence from the sanctuary also suggests a change in the religious orientation of the cult. One of the most striking features of the sanctuary complex in the Hellenistic period had been an extensive range of dining rooms, many complete with kitchen and bathing facilities, numbering in excess of 40.[131] Apart from one building, these were simply never rebuilt in the Roman period, and it "was so extensively remodelled that even the tops of the dining couches lay under the earliest Roman floor."[132] In his study of the issue of food sacrificed to idols in 1 Corinthians 8-10, Peter Gooch discusses these dining rooms in his

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[128]Slane (1990), p.5.
[129]Bookidis and Stroud (1997), p.273, suggest open-air worship prior to this date.
[130]Slane (1990), p.4.
[131]Bookidis (1974), p.267.
[132]DeMaris (1995a), p.107.

consideration of the background of the texts. In doing so he openly acknowledges that the dining rooms no longer existed in the first century CE, but seeks to overcome this problem by pointing to evidence that the preparation of food remained a significant activity within the temple.[133] This is undoubtedly true,[134] but it also unfortunately gives the impression of greater continuity in the forms of worship offered than is actually the case. What is most striking is that, "very little Roman pottery that safely may be assumed to have had a purely ritual function was found in the sanctuary of Demeter ...this situation differs substantially from that of the Greek period, when votive pottery and other objects of normal and miniature size were abundant. A considerable change in cult practice between the Greek and Roman periods is thereby attested."[135] Although the precise nature of these changes remains obscure,[136] it seems clear that, in the mid-first century CE, the cult of Demeter and Kore at Corinth experienced innovation as well as revival.

9.5.2 The Cult of Palaimon/Melikertes

Isthmia and its games were associated with the cult of Poseidon, and his temple there was one of the greatest of the ancient world. It is not clear whether the temple building suffered much damage in 146 BCE, but it is certain that the cult was disrupted for the very large 'long altar,' which stood immediately next to the temple in the open air, was removed and a cart road run across its foundations.[137] However, Poseidon was not the sole proprietor, for the games were also associated with the boy god Palaimon, also known by the name of Melikertes. According to myth, Palaimon was

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[133]Gooch (1993), pp.3-4.
[134]Slane (1990), p.72: "Vessels for use over a fire or in an oven form a significant proportion of the Roman pottery found in the Demeter sanctuary, and most show marks of heavy use."
[135]Slane (1990), p.64. See also Bookidis and Stroud (1997), p.435.
[136]DeMaris (1995a) attempts to explore the nature of the innovation involved. He draws attention to the discovery in the sanctuary of curse tablets (*defixiones*) and mosaics featuring snakes, and the finding both there, and at Isthmia, of open vessels (*kraters*) with snake decoration applied to the handles. He argues that, collectively, these artefacts indicate a shift of attention from Demeter to Kore, and from the fertility aspects of the cult to more chthonic ones, with a new stress on the underworld and on funerary concerns. Bookidis and Stroud (1997), p.434 n.67 are not convinced by his argument.
[137]Broneer, (1973) Vol.II, p.68.

the drowned son of the mad king of Orchomenos, and his funeral at Isthmia had led to the holding of the first games.[138] It thus seems that the games were understood as being held in his honour. By the time that Pausanias visited Isthmia sometime in the period 155-170 CE, a smaller temple dedicated to Palaimon stood immediately adjacent to that of Poseidon, and Pausanias records that it was in an underground chamber (*adyton*) associated with the Palaimonion that athletes underwent rituals involving the swearing of oaths to abide by the rules of the games.[139] Oath-taking does not seem to have been restricted to athletes, since Aelius Aristides (*Orations* 46.40) mentions the pleasure of taking Palaimon's oath and participating in his rites and ceremonies. In addition, Plutarch (*Theseus* 25) speaks of Palaimon's rites as secret nocturnal ones, and so does Philostratus (*Imagines* II.16). The vocabulary all three use to describe these rites, τελετή (Plutarch and Aristides) and ὄργια (Philostratus and Aristides), leaves little doubt, when combined with the emphasis on secrecy, that the cult of Palaimon was in fact a local mystery cult.[140]

When the cult began, and whether it had always had mysteries are questions shrouded in obscurity. Evidence that the cult existed at all in the Hellenistic period is somewhat thin although, on balance, one must conclude that it did.[141] In stark contrast to this uncertainty, the archaeological evidence from the Roman period expands the knowledge of the rites gleaned from literary sources. Within 20-30 metres south-east

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[138]Broneer, (1962), pp.25-28.

[139]Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece,* 2.2.1. Broneer is convinced that he and his team found this adyton, but others seem less convinced. See Broneer (1973) Vol.II, pp.111-112 and Koester (1990), p.364.

[140]For discussions of the literary evidence see Burkert (ET 1983), pp.196-99 and Koester (1990), pp.362-364.

[141]Broneer (1973), Vol.II, p.99 records that although he and his colleagues had expected to find an ancient cult place, "the findings in our trenches did not fit this conception of the shrine ...all the material remains of the Palaimonion turned out to be of Roman date." The remains of an enclosure (*temenos*) dating to the mid fifth century BCE have subsequently been discovered immediately south of the temple of Poseidon (the Roman Palaimonion is immediately south-east), and it could be that this enclosure was that of Palaimon. See Gebhard (1987), p.476, who also draws attention to a Scholiast to Pindar (Snell 6.5[1]) which suggests "that the child was ritually mourned as a part of the Isthmian festival. A wreath of pine and then later of wild celery crowned the victors, a sign of mourning for the dead child." Even so, as Koester (1990), p.359, points out, it would be impossible to reconstruct even Palaimon's story on the basis of the pre-Roman evidence.

of the temple of Poseidon were found three sacrificial pits. All of them were stone lined and showed clear evidence of heat damage. "All three pits contained much ash and many burned bones of sacrificial animals, all cattle, in some cases at least young bulls, which had been burned whole. This is of interest as confirmation of Philostratos' statement (*Imagines*, II.16) that black bullocks were sacrificed to Palaimon."[142] The three pits were dug successively and, although there may have been some chronological overlap in use of the first and second pit, the basic pattern is that a fresh pit was dug as the previous one became full. Apart from a series of steps next to the third pit, perhaps used to support seating, the pits and their enclosure constituted the entire cult apparatus in the first century.[143]

The dating of these three pits has proved controversial. In the official volumes written by Broneer, pit A is described as coming into use during the first half of the first century, pit B around 50 CE, and pit C from around 75 CE.[144] Thus, presumably, the worship of Palaimon resumed when the games returned to Corinthian control from that of Sikyon sometime between 7 BCE and 3 CE. However, in a 1989 article, D. Geagan announced that he had obtained new information from the member of Broneer's staff responsible for the original datings. "Dr. John Hayes of the Royal Ontario Museum has communicated by letter recent revisions to his earlier chronological observations."[145] Crucially, Hayes now believed that pit A had not come into use until

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[142]Broneer (1973) Vol.II, p.102 n.8. As well as these pits, archaeologists found large numbers of an unusual type of lamp with no handles, peculiar to this site. The lamps were therefore cult vessels, designed exclusively for the sanctuary of Palaimon. See Broneer (1977), Vol.III, p.35-42 who suggests that they were in use at all stages in the development of the Palaimonion during the Roman period. Gebhard et al. (1998), p.445 are more cautious: "While no certain examples are present in the early Pit A, the type seems to have been first introduced during the period of Palaimonion I (i.e., before ca. A.D. 80), though it is not common until the latter part of Palaimonion II." Koester (1990), p.366: "What was the significance of the nocturnal rites, illuminated by strange lamps, in which bulls were sacrificed in a secret ritual and burned in a pit?"

[143]See Broneer (1973) Vol.II, pp.100-04. A temple building was not constructed until well into the second century, and inscriptions honouring the benefactor responsible for it suggest that it had not long been completed when Pausanias saw it. See Geagan (1989), pp.358-60.

[144]Broneer (1973) Vol.II, pp.100-101.

[145]Geagan (1989), p.359 n.25.

the middle of the first century CE, and this view was confirmed by fresh excavations at Isthmia.[146] The worship of Palaimon did not resume at Isthmia until around 50 CE.

This is somewhat puzzling. Was there a period of around half a century when the games were held at Isthmia, but Palaimon was not worshipped? Elizabeth Gebhard finds this implausible and proposes that, although during this period the games were under Corinthian control, they were not held at Isthmia. Instead they were celebrated in the city stadium at Corinth.[147] The return of the games to Isthmia itself is perhaps commemorated by coinage of Nero from 57/58 CE or 58/59 CE, which has the name 'Isthmia' encircled by a wreath of *selinon*.[148] On the basis of such slender evidence, the only safe verdict is not proven. A vital inscription which might have settled the argument is sadly fragmentary.[149] Gebhard's case will only become convincing if further investigation confirms her impression that early first century material is absent from a rather wider area than simply that of the Palaimonion.[150] If she is wrong, then there arise some fascinating, if admittedly speculative, possibilities. Given we have no knowledge of how Palaimon was worshipped in the Hellenistic period, and cannot assume that this

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[146]Gebhard (1993), p.79.

[147]Gebhard (1993), pp.81-82 in fact proposes that Corinth resumed control of the games far sooner than 7 BCE - 3 CE. If they were not held at Isthmia, then the evidence provided by Strabo, *Geography* 8.6.22, is no longer decisive. She favours 40 BCE when coins began to be minted on which the name of the city was enclosed by a (victor's?) pine wreath.

[148]Gebhard (1993), p.86.

[149]Kent (1966), no.153 was set up by a certain Regulus to honour his father, who had been an *agonothetes* of the games. His father is also said to have done something '*ad Isthmum*', probably building work. It therefore seems that when this man was an *agonothetes*, the Isthmian games were indeed held at Isthmia. Unfortunately, the father could either be Lucius Castricius Regulus (*duovir* 21/22 CE) or Cn. Publicius Regulus (*duovir* 50/51 CE). Kent opts for the former, suggesting at the crucial point 'TIBereon caesarEON SEBASTEON ET agonothete ISTHMION ET CAESAReon' (capital letters indicate those portions of the inscription in existence). Gebhard suggests that the emperor in question was in fact Tiberius *Claudius*. Yet this is problematic. Unless Kent's reconstruction is more widely erroneous, there is not room for the sequence '*Tibereon Claudieon Caesareon Sebasteon*' found in West (1931), nos.82 and 83, to which Gebhard (1993), p.88 n.44, refers in her own support. To prove her point, Gebhard would therefore need to propose an alternative reconstruction of the entire inscription. Further, a return to Isthmia in the reign of Claudius does not fit all that neatly with the 'commemorative' coinage from the reign of Nero.

[150]Gebhard (1993), pp.84-85. Gebhard et al. (1998), p.416 n.24 seem to reflect such uncertainty by hedging their bets. They still feel that the number of early first century finds from the sanctuary, the theatre and the stadium are too small to suggest regular use, but concede that "on some occasions during this period they (the games) may have been held at their traditional site."

involved mysteries, then it may be that what we witness at Isthmia circa 50 CE is the establishment of a new mystery cult. Even if Gebhard is right, the worship of Palaimon in association with the games provides evidence of a local mystery cult attached to one of the most significant events in Corinthian civic life.

9.5.3 The Cult of Isis at Kenchreai

In the 1960s a substantial area of the harbour side at Kenchreai, the eastern and smaller of Corinth's two ports, was explored by archaeologists. At that date this was an innovative project, for part of the site was underwater. On the mole at the south-west end of the harbour, there was found evidence of eleven periods of construction, and/or alteration, running from pre-Augustan times down to the sixth or seventh century CE. It is in this area that Pausanias locates temples of Isis and Asklepios,[151] and here too that Apuleius sets his story of Lucius' initiation into the Isis cult.[152] In the first two periods of occupation it seems clear that the buildings were used for commercial purposes, with at least one substantial warehouse constructed during the reign of Augustus. But then, "presumably from the first century after Christ",[153] two rooms were adapted to create a small courtyard with a quadrangular niche at one end. This is the first evidence of specifically religious use of the buildings. Thereafter, development was impressive, with the construction of an apse, an enlarged courtyard and new precinct walls. These were probably built in the aftermath of the earthquake of 77 CE.[154] Around 100 CE there was further expansion with the addition of a Fountain Court complex and a Pylon court.[155] The former, so named because of the presence of a fountain and a mosaic floor, is defined as sitting beside the temple, "a sunken area, but not a building in the sense of a structure with walls, and presumably a roof."[156] The

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[151]Pausanias, *Descriptions of Greece*, 2.2.3.
[152]Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, XI.
[153]Scranton, Shaw & Ibrahim (1978), pp.70-71. These pages give a useful summary of the different phases of development. This part of the report was written by Scranton, and will be cited from now on in his name only.
[154]Period 4.
[155]Period 5.
[156]Scranton (1978), p.60.

Pylon court was given its name because the foundations next to its doorway seemed "excessive for a mere enclosure wall, and indeed suggests something rather more analogous to a tower - or to the pylon of an Egyptian gate."[157] There is no evidence of any further expansion until the third and fourth centuries CE[158] but then, after suffering earthquake damage and partial abandonment in either 365 CE or 375 CE,[159] what remained of the complex subsequently became a church.[160]

The identification of the nature of the site has become controversial. The excavation team concluded that it was a temple of Isis,[161] but Robert Wild states bluntly that, "I myself find it difficult to believe ...that this structure was a temple of any sort, much less an Iseum."[162] He points out that "at this site no inscriptions were recovered, no cultic or religious objects, not even a base for a cult statue."[163] Such objections are ill-founded. While nothing was found in the complex which definitely identifies it as such, there are a number of pieces of evidence which, although inconclusive when considered in isolation, combine to strongly suggest a temple of Isis. To argue that the complex is not a temple rather dismisses the text of Pausanias, and, if this rather splendid complex, situated in an area of otherwise commercial character, was not a temple, what was it? Further, the complex later became a church and such take-overs of pagan sites are not uncommon. The dedication of the temple to Isis also seems plausible. The *opus sectile* glass discovered in the Fountain Court contained Nilotic swamp scenes and,[164] for what it is worth, the layout of the site is compatible with such topographical indications as are given by Apuleius.[165] More significantly, the word

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[157]ibid.
[158]Periods 6 and 7.
[159]Period 8. See Scranton (1978), pp.75-78 for a discussion of the earthquake, its effects, and all subsequent periods. A change in sea level seems to have ensued, and this probably explains the spectacular discovery of a substantial quantity of *opus sectile* glass, apparently designed for use in decorative friezes, which was found in the Fountain Court still in its shipping crates.
[160]Periods 9-11.
[161]Scranton (1978), pp.71-75.
[162]Wild (1981), p.170.
[163]ibid.
[164]See above, p.291 n.159.
[165]Of course, we have no way of knowing whether Apuleius ever actually visited Kenchreai or not.

ΟΡΓΙΑ was found inscribed on a column.[166] Scranton notes what he takes to be a parallel inscription from Saloniki where an altar was found bearing an inscription to Εἶσιν Οργίαν - 'Isis of the Mysteries'. He supposes that "at Kenchreai, the all important word 'Isis' would have been higher on the column and now lost."[167] Whether this hypothesis is correct or not, given that Pausanias gives us a choice between temples dedicated to Isis and Asklepios, the word ὄργια surely suggests that it is the mystery deity who is more likely to have been worshipped in these buildings.

The beginning of her worship at the site in the first century is interesting. There is nothing at all to suggest that Isis had been worshipped on this site previously, so there are not the same questions of continuity and discontinuity as at Corinth and at Isthmia. Given the fact that one of the goddess' aspects was *Isis Pelagia*, Kenchreai in general, and its harbour side in particular, was an utterly logical location for her worship. What is remarkable about the Kenchreai temple is the rapidity of its development from humble beginnings. Scranton compares these beginnings to those of the cult of Sarapis at Delos, where an inscription by a descendant of the founder records that "it was founded, on the instruction of a vision, in a small place filthy with litter and dung, rented and adapted for the purpose of establishing the cult in it."[168] Yet, by the early years of the second century, the Isis complex provided a worthy counterpart to the temple of Aphrodite and statue of Poseidon on the opposite northern mole of the harbour. This expansion must have required very considerable financial resources. There are not such specific links to the 50s CE as with Demeter and Kore on the Acrocorinth, or Palaimon at Isthmia,[169] but this impressive building programme demonstrates once

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[166]This is unknown to Wild, who admits (1981), p.169 n.22, to not having read Scranton's final report. The inscription had earlier been misread as ΟΡΓΑΑ and so was not mentioned in the preliminary reports.

[167]Scranton (1978), p.73.

[168]Scranton (1978), p.75.

[169]The beginning of the cult of Isis at Kenchreai lies somewhere between the end of Augustus' reign in 14 CE and the earthquake of 77 CE.

again that the mystery cults were a significant factor in the religious environment of the Corinthian Christians.

One might also suggest that they were an *increasingly* significant factor. While we have no information as to the origin of their financial resources, it seems reasonable to suppose that the investment in buildings at Kenchreai and on the Acrocorinth provides a rough index of popularity. If so, and if the mysteries of Palaimon were an innovation introduced during the 50s CE, then the mystery cults appear to have been advancing in first century Corinth. This certainly ties in with an apparently widespread increase in the popularity of Isis and Sarapis. Wild has demonstrated that these mystery deities enjoyed a peak of popularity in the second century CE. Almost half of all the known temples of Isis were constructed during this century, and the surviving votive inscriptions shows two sharp numerical peaks, one in the second century BCE, the other in the second century CE. Wild comments that "surely the preceding period of gestation must have extended well back into the first century."[170] Of course, what is true of the cults of Isis and Sarapis is not necessarily true of the other mystery cults. Further, such general conclusions about change may hide a host of regional variations.[171] Nevertheless, our evidence from Corinth, admittedly fragmentary and inconclusive as it is, does seem to fit this pattern. The suggestion that the mystery cults influenced the practical consciousness of the Corinthians is a plausible one.

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[170]Wild (1981), p.5. Wild seeks to correlate this upsurge in popularity with theological change. Here he develops further the thesis of Vidman (1970) that in the first and second century CE there was a renewed emphasis upon the specifically Egyptian elements of these cults. Wild argues, somewhat speculatively, that a new emphasis was placed on Osiris and on the possession of actual Nile water in which he was felt to be immanent. If Wild were to be proved right then, at first sight, this might appear to suggest a sort of 'magical sacramentalism', the existence of which amongst the mystery cults I have been at pains to deny. However, there is no evidence at all of the Nile water having been drunk, or of it having been poured over worshippers, or of it being used in any other way which could conceivably be interpreted as securing 'sacramental' union with the god.

[171]Bookidis (1987), p.480: "As specialisation has affected most aspects of ancient art and archaeology, so it has invaded the field of ancient religion ...The change has arisen from an increasing awareness of regional variations in ancient religion, which have made the generalisations of the past somewhat suspect." On the other hand Corinth, as a major port, may have felt early the impact of any spreading religious change.

10

Conclusions

10.1 Paul and the Corinthians

The Corinthians responded to Paul's advocacy of conversion and adopted a new Christian set of religious symbols. Yet the significance which they granted to these specifically Christian symbols was not solely determined by Paul. The Graeco-Roman society and culture in which they lived also played a part. At the level of discursive consciousness transformation dominates but, at the level of practical consciousness, there is also a significant degree of reproduction. The Corinthians' understanding of their own conversion and its consequences inevitably indigenises their new faith to some degree. This process was far from unique to the Corinthians in particular, or to early Christianity in general. Over the preceding centuries, those of the mystery cults which were oriental in origin had undergone a process of Hellenisation. While the content of myths and the details of rites had often remained oriental, the basic pattern is that provided by Eleusis.[1] The result combines the appeal of the exotic with the ease of the familiar. Although the proportions of the mixture are undoubtedly different, something similar occurs among the Corinthians. They develop an interpretation of conversion and its consequences which allows them to enjoy the experience of transformation in the Spirit without having to voyage deep into the strange and unfamiliar social world charted by Paul. Much to his disappointment, they develop an interpretation of the Christian faith containing both the enticingly exotic, and the comfortingly familiar. Paul would have preferred them both less enticed and less comfortable.

One way of characterising these differences between Paul and the Corinthians is through their respective conceptions of sin and its consequences. For Paul,

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[1]See above, pp.244-45.

sin plays a vital role in his understanding of conversion. The human plight comprises both transgression and bondage to the power of sin, their inter-relationship exemplified by the problem of unrecognised sin. Human existence has been infected by sin at every level and the solution provided by Christ is correspondingly comprehensive. Paul interprets the forensic and participatory categories of his thought by each other, and closely connects the individual with the communal and cosmic levels of his thought, in order to better express his all-encompassing gospel. Such radical conceptions of plight and solution have strong consequences for the way in which humanity is perceived. It is now divided not primarily by gender, ethnic status or social status, but by its response to Paul's gospel. Christians are both united with each other, and separated from those who are still in their sins.

While we have insufficient information to enable us to reconstruct the Corinthians' views on sin, it does seem that it played a far less significant role in their understanding of conversion than in that of Paul. For the consequences of his understanding of the human plight and the solution provided by Christ are present among the Corinthians only in much diluted form. In their attitude to one another, and in their approach to the outside world, the people and practices of Graeco-Roman society, the Corinthians display neither the degree of internal unity nor the degree of separation from unbelievers desired by Paul. The influence of the voluntary associations and the mystery cults have served to promote the following features:

(i) In the internal life of the Corinthian congregation emphasis is not placed on the whole church and its unity as clearly as by Paul. The Corinthians' understanding of baptism, the rite of conversion, does not fully reflect some concepts that are central for the apostle. The forgiveness of sins, conformity to Christ and incorporation into his body are subsidiary to the transformation of the individual wrought by the experience of the receipt of the Spirit. Further, the Corinthians perceive baptism to create a bond between individual believers and those who preside at their baptism.

This bond is one of the dynamics promoting 'parties' or factions among the Corinthians. Smaller groups rather than the entire congregation become the focus of loyalty for individual converts. It is therefore not surprising to find that the Corinthians have a restricted sense of their obligations to one another and to Christians elsewhere. In some circumstances litigation between church members is acceptable and, at the very least, aiding the poor in Jerusalem is not a high priority.

(ii) In their attitude towards the world outside the church, the Corinthians do not emphasise separation to the same degree as Paul. They believe that, at baptism, God extends His patronage and protection to each individual convert, so granting them a new exalted personal religious status. This lifts the individual far above those who have not shared his or her experience of the Spirit, but does not engender a critical attitude towards the social and religious practices of those outside the church. Those outside are characterised more by unwitting inferiority than by infectious impurity. The competition for honour and status endemic within Graeco-Roman society also finds expression in the life of the church. There are factions whose leaders expect recognition from followers, and these individuals attempt to use the Lord's Supper as a vehicle by which to display their status. In the Corinthians' understanding, conversion elevates but does not separate.

In developing their own understanding of conversion and its consequences, distinct in certain respects from that held by the person who had first advocated conversion to them, the Corinthians provide one of the earliest examples of a process that was to be repeated many times, and in numerous contexts, over the course of the next two millennia.

10.2 Conversion and Future Research

In relation to the issues examined in **Part 1** of the thesis, **'Studying Conversion and Converts,'** I hope that my exploration of the understanding of conversion and its consequences held by Paul and the Corinthians has served to clarify certain points. They are:

(i) By comparing two understandings of conversion from within early Christianity I have illustrated the variations which can arise within a single religious tradition. If there are significant differences in the way conversion is understood even within a single tradition, then a quest for a universal and inclusive understanding or definition of conversion is unlikely to be helpful. It risks obscuring precisely those distinctive elements which may be of greatest importance to individual converts and communities of converts.

(ii) Yet, employing the case of the Corinthians, I have attempted to demonstrate the influence exercised over such a particular understanding of conversion by factors other than the early Christian tradition itself. For example, the Corinthians' understanding of personal transformation is partially shaped by the understanding of such transformation current within the mystery cults. There are common features to be found across the boundaries of religious traditions. An approach which emphasises only particularity will also miss much.

(iii) Given (i) and (ii), a comparative approach has strong advantages. It has the potential both to recognise that which is distinctive in a particular understanding of conversion and that which it shares with others. That the Corinthians are Paul's converts, but nevertheless develop an understanding of conversion which departs from his as well as resembles it, illustrates this point.

(iv) Studies of conversion need to pay attention to both the individual and social dimensions of the transformation involved. An important feature of Paul's understanding of conversion is the availability of evidence relating to both dimensions. To concentrate on only one of these dimensions would neglect the often complex interplay between the individual and communal elements of religious experience.

(v) Such experience should not be regarded simply as a construct. That Paul's conversion experience played a significant part in shaping his theology demonstrates that conversion experiences can shape conversion accounts, and the authorised interpretations of conversions developed by communities, as well as vice versa.

(vi) Structuration theory can provide a helpful theoretical resource for the study of conversion. Giddens' constant striving to turn dualisms into dualities is helpful in several ways, but perhaps especially in the ability it confers to conceptualise social change. In contrast to approaches which take the early churches as given phenomena for analysis, this aspect of structuration theory helps to highlight their nature as communities of converts and reminds us that the most startling thing about them is their existence.

In terms of further research, these conclusions suggest the possibility of other comparative studies which move beyond the boundaries of early Christianity. Obvious candidates for inclusion would be the mystery cults, considered this time in their own right, the philosophical schools, and Judaism. Such studies would aim to explore particular understandings of conversion, considering each in its own right, but also recognise that each may be best understood if it can be located on a map of conversion in the first century Graeco-Roman world.

Appendix 1 - A Classification of Paul's Use of Καλέω κτλ.

In providing a tentative classification I adapt the proposals of William W. Klein, who provides a useful survey of Paul's use of the *verb*.[1] However, in important respects I am in disagreement with Klein's approach to the material, especially the narrow focus of his article, which concentrates on the linguistic genealogy of Paul's usage.[2] This disagreement is reflected in the categories I employ. Klein proposes what he terms an axis of source or origin, an axis of instrument, an axis of circumstance, and an axis of goal or purpose. I retain Klein's axes of instrument, and of goal or purpose as useful categories, but not his axis of source or origin, nor his axis of circumstance. In his axis of source or origin Klein places only Rom. 9:24 with its statement that God has called οὐ μόνον ἐξ Ἰουδαίων ἀλλὰ καὶ ἐξ ἐθνῶν. Although the presence of the preposition ἐξ with its overtones of separation is indeed striking it seems more than a little artificial to separate this use of καλέω from those in 1 Cor. 7 which relate to circumcision, a vital component of Jewish national identity. A linguistic criterion (the presence of a preposition) is dividing uses which raise the same theological and social issues. I avoid this by proposing a category of status on being called. In addition to all uses concerned with the ethnic status of those who were called, this also contains those uses which refer to the marital and social status of those who were called, instances which Klein places in his axis of circumstance.

I further depart from Klein in proposing a category of new role/identity, and a category of divine identity and intention. Again, the aim is to select categories which reflect the theological and social issues raised by Paul's usage. Further, my categories are far from rigid. Some of Paul's uses of καλέω κτλ. fit into more than one category, and in these cases I have given the references twice, using italics to

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[1]Klein (1984), pp.53-64. He does not consider either the noun or the adjective.

[2]One has not necessarily understood the meaning of a term by explaining its derivation. See above, p.57 n.13.

indicate a second appearance. It seemed less important to force each occurrence into a single category for the sake of neatness than to indicate the breadth of meaning conveyed by the concept of calling in certain contexts.

A. Category of Divine Identity and Intention (9 occurrences)

(i) Creation - Rom. 4:17, 1 Cor. 1:26

(ii) Calling reflects God's Purposes - Rom. 8:28, Rom. 8:30[2]

(iii) Abraham's Descendants to be Named through Isaac - Rom. 9:7

(iv) Election by Calling not Works - Rom. 9:12

(v) God's Call is Irrevocable - Rom. 11:29

(vi) The One Calling is Faithful - 1 Thess. 5:24

B. Category of Instrument (3 occurrences)

(i) Called by/through Grace - 1 Cor. 15:9, Gal. 1:6, 1:15

C. Category of New Role/Identity (12 occurrences)

(i) Called to Apostleship - Rom. 1:1, 1 Cor. 1:1, *Gal. 1:15*

(ii) Called to be Saints - Rom. 1:7, 1 Cor. 1:2

(iii) Called to be God's People/Family - Rom. 1:6, *8:30[2], 9:24*, 9:25, 9:26, 1 Cor. 1:9

D. Category of Status on Being Called (13 occurrences)

(i) Statements of Principle on Status - 1 Cor. 7:17, 7:20[2], 7:24

(ii) Ethnic Status - Rom. 9:24, 1 Cor 1:24, 7:18[2]

(iii) Social Status - *1 Cor. 1:26*, 7:21, 7:22[2]

(iv) Marital Status - 1 Cor. 7:15

E. Category of Purpose (7 occurrences)

(i) Into Fellowship - *1 Cor. 1:9*

(ii) To Peace - *1 Cor. 7:15*

(iii) To Freedom - Gal. 5:13

(iv) A Call Upwards - Phil. 3:14

(v) Into God's Kingdom and Glory (cf. Rom. 8:30) - 1 Thess. 2:12

(vi) To Sanctification - 1 Thess. 4:17, *1 Thess. 5:24*

Appendix 2 - Meaning and Righteousness in Rom. 6:7

E.P. Sanders draws a sharp distinction between what he regards as two distinguishable uses by Paul of the passive form of δικαιόω. One use is 'forensic' and denotes being righteoused from concrete sins; the other and more dominant use is paticipatory, and denotes the transfer from being under the power of sin to being under the lordship of Christ. Sanders is explicit as to where in Paul we find the clearest examples of these two uses: "One who becomes a Christian is 'justified' from sins (1 Cor. 6:9-11) or from the power of sin (Rom. 6:7)."[1] These two texts represent the opposite poles of Paul's use of the verb. In the course of **4.3**, I argued that close examination of the text reveals that justification in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 is not restricted to a 'forensic' sense. While δικαιόω in 6:11 does reflect the strong legal imagery of the preceding argument, this imagery itself helps to grant the passage a participatory flavour. By focusing on the transformation of identity involved in conversion, Paul here implies the freedom of the believer from the power of sin. One of the two opposites poles of meaning established by Sanders has broken down, and the following question arises: is justification exclusively participatory in Rom. 6:7 any more than it is exclusively 'forensic' in 1 Cor. 6:9-11?[2]

In Rom. 6:6 Paul expresses the view that he and his readers have been crucified with Christ so that they might no longer be enslaved to sin. Thus, it is something of a surprise when Paul writes in 6:7 ὁ γὰρ ἀποθανὼν δεδικαίωται

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[1]Sanders (1977), p.501. See also pp.472,503,506,545. Also Sanders (1983), p.10 and Sanders (1991), p.48.

[2]Some earlier scholars had, far from distinguishing between the meaning of righteousness in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and Rom. 6:7, identified the two. See Lightfoot (1895), p.213; Bultmann (1924, ET 1995), p.195; and above, pp.138-40.

ἀπὸ τῆς ἁμαρτίας. One might have expected him to keep the thought parallel to that of 6:6 by using the verb ἐλευθερόω to say that the one who has died is set free from sin, so giving positive expression to what has just been said in negative form.[3] Sanders claims that this is nevertheless just what Paul does do. "In Rom. 6 the general context of participation in Christ's death so that one may participate in life determines the meaning of *dikaoumai*. It *cannot* mean 'justified' in the sense of 1 Cor. 6:9-11, where one is justified from sins. Thus the usually juristic *dikaoumai* does not determine the meaning of Rom. 6:7, but is rather pressed into the service of another conception."[4] Instead of meaning justified from sins, it means justified from the power of Sin, something that can aptly and accurately be translated into English as 'set free from sin.'[5] Rom. 6:7 is an instance where "the normally juristic, forensic or ethical language of righteousness is forced to bear the meaning of 'life by participation in the body of Christ'."[6]

The idea that Paul has coerced language which usually means one thing into meaning another is one which Sanders refers to several times. The judicial meaning is "the principal and normal meaning of the terms for 'righteousness' both in Greek and English,"[7] yet Paul uses it to mean something else. "The passive of *dikaioun* does not easily bear this meaning - changed, transferred, incorporated into another

[3]Commentators often explain Paul's unusual expression as an allusion to the rabbinical principle of Shab 151b baraita that when a person dies they are freed from the obligation to observe the law's commandments. See Sanday & Headlam (1895), p.159; Käsemann (1980), p.160; Fitzmyer (1993), pp.436-37. Along with Ziesler (1989), p.160 I doubt that there is any such allusion here. This is because (i) although 5:20 establishes a connection between the two, it is sin and not the law which is under discussion here, (ii) the death referred to by Paul is clearly not literal death but that of the person who dies with Christ, and (iii) the rabbinical principle is attributed to Rabbi Shimeon ben Gamaliel (c.140 CE). Even if this attribution is accurate we have no way of knowing whether the principle was current in the first century.

[4]Sanders (1977), p.503.

[5]This course is followed by the majority of English translations. See the AV, RSV, NRSV, NIV, GNB. Of these only the AV provides the reader with 'justified' as an alternative reading.

[6]Sanders (1977), p.504.

[7]Sanders (1991), p.47. I have considerable doubts about this sweeping claim. See below, p.306 n.14.

person - but Paul forced it to do so."[8] About this coercion Sanders never asks the obvious question of why Paul should do such a thing. If what Paul meant in Rom. 6:7 was that the one who has died with Christ is set free from the power of Sin, then why did he not express himself using ἐλευθερόω, as he does in 6:18 and 6:22? If, as Sanders claims, both Paul and his readers understood δικαιόω as a forensic term in their everyday speech, why risk misunderstanding by using the verb in another way altogether? Why not find alternative terms to express alternative ideas?

Here some reflection upon the relationship between language and meaning can offer us valuable assistance. In their work on the subject, Riches and Millar point to "the important distinction between, on the one hand, linguistic entities, sentences and other expressions, and, on the other hand, the senses possessed by these expressions on particular occasions of use. The interpreter seeks to bridge the gulf between the knowledge of what inscriptions a text contains and the knowledge of what is being said through these inscriptions by the author of the text."[9] Thus to discern the meaning of a declarative sentence one needs to know what is being expressed by that sentence in its context. This means that there is no purely linguistic level at which one can determine the meaning of a sentence, and the ability to read Greek does not in itself grant us access to the meaning of sentences in the New Testament. We need also to understand which propositions are attached to sentences, and thus what can be inferred from particular statements. This is something which is shaped by convention. "Sentences express what they do because of conventions which govern the use of their constituent expressions."[10]

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[8]Sanders (1991), p.48.
[9]Riches & Millar (1985), p.37.
[10]Riches & Millar (1985), p.40.

Not surprisingly, the conventions governing the use of particular terms and expressions vary across time and space. "What a person means by the English term 'democracy' will depend upon the conventional uniformities governing the person's use of the term. The network of conventional links which reflects the use of the term by a Marxist of Stalinist inclinations will be rather different from those of a New Right Conservative."[11] Yet despite the fundamental differences between what 'democracy' means when its use is governed by these alternative conventional networks, it does not follow that the two networks are entirely unrelated. "There will be a degree of overlap between the concepts of democracy which they determine. *All* concepts of democracy pertain to rule by the people but what in detail that amounts to will depend upon the wider networks in which the concepts figure."[12] Thus, presumably, the development of new conventional networks governing the use of terms draws upon existing ones while at the same time modifying them more or less radically. It is easy to see why one of the clearest ways of explaining what structuration theory has to say about social practices is through the analogy of language. "The rules and resources of language simultaneously structure communication and are reproduced in that very communication. They are both the medium which permits meaningful communication and the outcome of that communication. They are both enabling - they facilitate communication - and constraining - they define and limit meaningful communication."[13]

What are the implications of this for Paul's use of δικαιόω in Rom. 6:7? On the one hand, Sanders is right to be fully aware of the possibility of transforming the meaning of a word by using it in a new context, and is right to draw

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[11]Riches & Millar (1985), p.42.
[12]ibid.
[13]Horrell (1996), p.48. One should note that Giddens is not arguing that society is like a language. See above, p.35 n.114. Rather language serves simply as an analogy, albeit an illuminating and important one.

our attention to the fact that where we would expect Paul to have used ἐλευθερόω he instead employs δικαιόω. Yet on the other, he overlooks the fact that even as Rom. 6:7 modifies the meaning of δικαιόω, it also inevitably reproduces it. If the previous meaning of righteousness terminology for his readers was a forensic one,[14] Paul can certainly transform this, but he cannot simply obliterate this previous meaning as he does so. In Rom. 6:7 δικαιόω can and does mean being set free from the power of sin through participation in Christ, but it cannot do so to the exclusion of its forensic sense.

This gives us an important indication of why Paul did use δικαιόω in Rom. 6:7. It is often observed that Rom. 1-4 is dominated by the concept of the human plight as having transgressed, and Rom. 6 by that of being under the power of Sin, Rom. 5 forming a bridge through the use of both concepts.[15] Against this background the entire point of using δικαιόω in 6:7 is as a statement of equivalence, requiring the use of a forensic term in a participatory context. Paul therefore does not want his readers to come to 6:7 and switch effortlessly from a forensic understanding of the verb to an

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See Giddens (1984), p.24 for an assessment of the limitations of the analogy.

[14]As Sanders assumes, but Ziesler (1972), p.212 argues on the basis of the Hebrew and Greek background that Paul's use of the verb is "essentially relational or forensic," while the noun and adjective describe "behaviour within relationship." Thus, the previous conventional networks governing the sense of righteousness terminology are not purely forensic. The problem with Ziesler's work is the assumption that in understanding the Hebrew and Greek background he has also understood Paul's own usage. As Riches and Millar (1985), p.42 point out, "it is obvious on reflection that an author or editor who takes over some linguistic expression or the core of some concept need not be borrowing uncritically." Just because others before him maintained a distinction between the meaning of the verb and that of the noun and adjective does not mean that Paul did so. Rom. 6:7 itself rather highlights this problem, for Ziesler (1972), p.201, insists that the verb is here forensic even although it appears "in primarily ethical-renewal surroundings." Ziesler thus implies that the meaning of the verb is unaffected by its context, Sanders (1977), p.503 that its context is the only factor shaping its meaning: "In Rom. 6 the general context of participation in Christ's death so that one may participate in life determines the meaning of *dikaoumai.*" Ziesler forgets that authors can change and develop the conventional networks governing meaning, Sanders that as they do so they inevitably continue to draw upon existing ones. If Ziesler is correct in his understanding of the Hebrew and Greek background of Paul's use of righteousness terminology, then perhaps he provides an indication as to one of the ways in which Paul modifies its meaning.

[15]See Sanders (1977), pp.498-99 and de Boer (1988), pp.147-56; (1989), p.182. Even if Sanders is wrong in supposing that both the principal and normal meaning of righteousness terminology with which Paul's readers were familiar was the 'judicial' one, it is certainly a valid observation that most of his uses of these terms in Rom. 1-4 have been forensic. In the context of this letter, the use he makes of the verb in Rom.

exclusively participatory one. Instead, he intends to provoke dissonance, and by doing so to secure from his readers a recognition that to be justified by the forgiveness of one's sins is also to be justified by being set free from the power of Sin, and vice versa. Paul wishes to make the two concepts one. The meaning of δικαιόω in 6:7 is therefore fully forensic in the sense that, if it were not, there would be no point to its use here, and Paul could and should have used ἐλευθερόω. Yet it is also fully participatory in that, by using this forensic transfer term in a context that is otherwise entirely participatory, Paul transforms its meaning. Δικαιόω itself becomes a participatory term, and transformation of meaning is achieved in, and through, reproduction.

Just as we concluded that the use of δικαιόω in 1 Cor. 6:9-11 is not exclusively forensic, so we are now able to conclude that its use in Rom. 6:7 is not exclusively participatory. In relation to the texts which he regards as his most secure examples of each type, Sanders' thesis that Paul makes two distinguishable uses of δικαιόω has not survived examination. Instead, in both 1 Cor. 6:9-11 and Rom. 6:7, Paul allows the forensic and participatory themes of his theology to interpret each other. As he does so he inevitably draws on existing conventional networks governing the meaning of righteousness terminology. Yet, in any given instance, Paul does not necessarily draw exclusively upon one of these networks. Writing in the context of a new religious movement, and therefore seeking to forge a vocabulary by which to express what it meant to be converted to faith in Christ, Paul often broke down the distinction between different networks of convention. To simply ask whether, in general, Paul intends righteousness terminology in a forensic or participatory sense would therefore be a somewhat crude question. Sometimes he may indeed draw upon

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6:7 therefore runs counter to expectations which Paul himself has created.

one existing set of conventions and so provide an instance in which righteousness is quite clearly one and not the other[16] but, in other cases, Paul blends the two, with varying degrees of emphasis. Whereas Sanders perceives Paul to have established sharply differentiated categories of meaning through his use of δικαιόω, I believe the opposite. One of the uses to which Paul put this vocabulary was the blurring of the distinction between the forensic and the participatory.[17]

Paul's use of δικαιόω therefore cannot be used as a support for the contention that it is the participatory categories alone which best reflect what Paul 'really' thought. Yet Sanders is right that Paul does not systematically treat justification as a forensic gateway to life in Christ so that one must first be forgiven in order to enter into union with Christ. It is equally accurate to say that "one dies with Christ to the power of sin and lives in the Spirit, *which also concretely means* that one stops (and is acquitted of) sinning and produces the fruit of the Spirit."[18] The problem comes when Sanders goes on to say "but we cannot understand Paul's thought the other way

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[16]In 1 Cor. 4:1-5 we encountered an instance of δικαιόω where the forensic sense appears completely dominant. See above, p.308 n.16.

[17]I therefore disagree with Sanders' belief that what Paul unselfconsciously understood to be one we can retrospectively discern to be two. Instead I would take texts like Rom. 6:7 and 1 Cor. 6:9-11 to indicate that Paul did indeed understand them to be one, but that he did so consciously, forging their unity. There is considerable tension in Sanders' position, for Paul is said to have conceived Christ's death for the forgiveness of sins and Christ's death to release from the power of Sin not as two different things but as one; yet, he is also said to have coerced a transfer term which in normal linguistic usage would be applied only to the first of these so as also to apply to the second. The first assertion suggests a lack of self-consciousness as to category distinctions, the second a strong awareness of them. I stand much closer to the position of Martyn, who sees in Paul's thought a deliberate pushing beyond forensic categories. See again Martyn (1997a), pp.152-53. The difference would be that whereas by 'pushing beyond' Martyn would seem to mean leaving behind in the sense of rendering decisively subsidiary, I would point to Paul's use of δικαιόω as indicating something much more akin to equal importance. De Boer (1988), pp.147-56, and (1989), pp.182-85, argues that forensic categories are subsidiary on the basis that Paul shares them with those against whom he argues in Romans and Galatians. In Romans Paul explores common forensic ground first before moving on to discuss participatory ideas which are more fully his own. However, it is difficult to see why matters over which one disagrees with others are necessarily more important in one's own overall pattern of thought than ones where there is agreement, or why that which appears first in a discussion is necessarily subsidiary to that which appears second.

[18]Sanders (1977), p.507.

around,"[19] for Paul does sometimes express himself in that opposite order. At Gal. 1:4 Paul speaks of Christ as τοῦ δόντος ἑαυτὸν ὑπὲρ τῶν ἁμαρτιῶν ἡμῶν, ὅπως ἐξέληται ἡμᾶς ἐκ τοῦ αἰῶνος τοῦ ἐνεστῶτος πονηροῦ. Here Christ's death for sins is said to be instrumental in the release of believers from bondage to the power of sin.[20] There are also occasions when these two concepts are so fused that one would be hard pressed to speak of an order at all. At 1 Cor. 15:17 Paul says that if Christ has not been raised then ἔτι ἐστὲ ἐν ταῖς ἁμαρτίαις ὑμῶν. Is this a claim that if Christ has not been raised believers remain guilty of their sins, or a claim that if he has not been raised believers remain under the power of sin? Surely it is both. It is a mistake to force a choice between the forensic and participatory elements in Paul's theology so that only one or the other can be regarded as truly characteristic of his thought.

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[19]ibid.

[20]Sanders (1977), p.465 disagrees. "When Paul writes that the Lord Jesus Christ 'gave himself for our sins to deliver us from the present evil age', we note the implication that not only are past transgressions remitted, but that Christians are delivered from the evil aeon. Thus the *purpose* of Christ's death was not simply to provide expiation, but that he might become Lord and thus save those who belong to him and are 'in' him." The exegetical sleight of hand involved here is not difficult to spot. Sanders' position would be tenable if Paul had written that Christ died *in order that sins* might be forgiven and those who belong to him delivered from the present evil age. However what Paul says is that Christ died for *sins in order that* (ὅπως) those who belong to him might be delivered. Sanders' interpretation requires the expression of *purpose* to come before the mention of *sins*, but in fact it comes after it.

Appendix 3 - 1 Cor. 10:1-22 and the Myth of Magical Sacramentalism

In these verses Paul provides a midrashic interpretation of the experiences of the Israelites in the desert, during which he speaks of the ancestors as having received forms of both baptism and communion, yet still sinning so as to incur God's judgement, and forfeit entry to the promised land: κατεστρώθησαν γὰρ ἐν τῇ ἐρήμῳ (10:5). The function performed by this warning in Paul's argument is clear. It provides an illustration of the danger of being disqualified (ἀδόκιμος) from the race for salvation, which Paul has just spoken of in relation to his own ministry in 9:24-27, and it prepares for the warning against taking part in idol-feasts which is to come in 10:14-22. Paul is concerned lest the Corinthians fall to destruction (10:12). He discerns potential disaster unless they mend their ways, but the Corinthians apparently do not share his concern. It is this lack of concern which is purportedly explained by the suggestion that the Corinthians were 'magical sacramentalists,' "die sich durch die Sakramente vor aller Gefährdung gefeit wähnen."[1] The Corinthians consider that participation in the sacraments provides a complete guarantee of future salvation, irrespective of any immoral conduct in which they might currently indulge,[2] and so turn the sacraments into a sort of "natural charm."[3] It is this attitude which Paul seeks to correct.

Yet how is it that the Corinthians believe 'magical sacramentalism' to operate? If the Corinthians regard the sacraments as protective talismans, granting them

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[1]Schrage (1995), p.381. We should note from the outset that the term '*magical* sacramentalism' is a loaded one, for the dividing line between religion and magic is very much in the eye of the beholder. One person's positive religious experience may be another's crude magic. For their devotees, the mystery cults fell on the religious side of the divide. Walsh (1994), p.xxxiii points out that, in his *Apology*, when in court on a charge of 'magic', Apuleius sought to establish "a distinction between healthy curiosity, which seeks knowledge of the true reality by intellectual effort and religious experience, and the debased curiosity which seeks a false reality by way of magic and sensuality." In Apuleius' case the appropriate religious experience took the form of many initiations.

[2]Schrage (1995), p.14: "Speziell der massive Sakramentalismus könnte in Korinth nicht nur die Begründung für die Freigabe der Teilnahme an Kultmahlen abgegeben haben, sondern auch für die der πορνεία."

[3]Conzelmann (ET 1975), p.167.

security through their union with Christ, then what are the threats which they aim to ward off? There are only two possibilities. They are (**1**) that the sacraments provide protection against some danger inherent in idol-feasts themselves, and (**2**) that the sacraments provide protection against the wrath of a jealous God, angered by disloyalty. I shall examine each possibility in turn, before moving on to suggest (**3**) an alternative rationale for the continued Corinthian involvement in cult meals.

1. Cult Meals - Dining in Danger?

Far from believing cult meals to be inherently dangerous occasions at which Christian participants required sacramental protection, the Corinthians seem simply not to have recognised that such meals were dangerous. Instead they say, οἴδαμεν ὅτι οὐδὲν εἴδωλον ἐν κόσμῳ, καί ὅτι οὐδεὶς θεὸς εἰ μὴ εἷς (8:4). It is this rather rational sounding piece of monotheism which Paul refers back to in 10:19 with rhetorical questions designed to shield him from the accusation of according reality to other gods. τί οὖν φημι; ὅτι εἰδωλοθυτόν τί ἐστιν; ἢ ὅτι εἴδωλόν τί ἐστιν; Having secured the recognition that he too would answer no to these questions, Paul can then safely move on to express his opinion that although the reality behind idols is not divine, it is demonic.[4] He is instructing the Corinthians as to the existence of a danger which they have not previously appreciated, not warning them that they are wrong to rely on 'sacramental' protection from a danger which they already feared.

Thus, if the Corinthians know that an idol is nothing, they do not need 'sacramental' protection. Fee seems to miss this point, and assumes that the Corinthians' knowledge and their 'magical sacramentalism' go together. He writes, "their argument with Paul most likely included some reference to their own security through the sacraments, which so identified them as Christians that attendance at the idol temples

[4]Calvin (ET 1960), p.218.

was immaterial since those 'gods' did not exist (8:4-6)."[5] Yet if the gods did not exist, then the degree to which one was identified as a Christian through the sacraments was irrelevant to one's security. What was there in an idol's temple which could do anyone harm? Barrett at least accepts that the knowledge that idols have no existence and 'magical sacramentalism' are "essentially different,"[6] but then suggests that they could be combined without initially offering any explanation as to how.[7] Yet how can an attitude which regards a particular activity, i.e., attending cult meals, as harmless be combined with one which sees in the same activity a danger from which there is need of protection? Far from being identical or even compatible, the Corinthians' knowledge and their supposed 'magical sacramentalism' are mutually contradictory.

2. Cult Meals - Provoking God's Wrath?

Paul does not think that the Corinthians should only be afraid of the demonic reality lurking behind idols. He also wishes them to avoid idol feasts out of fear of the Lord. At 10:22 he asks, ἢ παραζηλοῦμεν τὸν κύριον; μὴ ἰσχυρότεροι αὐτοῦ ἐσμεν; At 11:30 he explains that some of them have died or are ill because of their abuse of the Lord's Supper. Perhaps the Corinthians are 'magical sacramentalists' in the sense that they believe that they are protected from the wrath of God which would otherwise fall upon them as a result of their breach of their covenant relationship with Him. They sin that grace might abound, and Paul is informing them that God will not

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[5]Fee (1987), p.443.
[6]Barrett (1971b), p.224.
[7]Barrett obviously noticed the problem, since he provides an endnote to his commentary (1971b), p.399, in which he suggests that the 'magical sacramentalists' and those who emphasise knowledge are different groups. However, this makes the connection between the content of 10:19 and 8:4-6 difficult to explain. Why should Paul introduce material aimed at those possessing knowledge into chapter 10, where his target is those who are 'magical sacramentalists'? Once the connection between 10:19 and 8:4-6 is acknowledged, then the whole of 10:14-22 reads more as if it were directed to those possessing knowledge. In order to sustain the concept of two separate groups one would be left arguing that the midrash of 10:1-13 was directed against the 'magical sacramentalists,' and 10:14-22 against those possessing knowledge, something scarcely credible in light of the διόπερ with which v.14 begins, signalling that what follows is an application of what has gone before.

tolerate that.[8] While it is certainly true that attending the feasts of even non-existent idols might be construed as disloyalty to the Lord, Paul conducts his argument specifically in terms of κοινωνία, emphasising the sheer impossibility of being united both to the Lord and to idols. οὐ δύνασθε ποτήριον κυρίου πίνειν καὶ ποτήριον δαιμονίων, οὐ δύνασθε τραπέζης κυρίου μετέχειν καὶ τραπέζης δαιμονίων (10:21). This builds directly on the assertion that although idols are nothing the sacrifices made to them are offered to demons (10:20), and so is designed to counter the Corinthians' false deduction that because idols do not exist, their cult meals are harmless. It is difficult to see how the Corinthians could regard as sinful entering into κοινωνία with something that did not exist. In that case God would literally have nothing of which to be jealous, and the Corinthians no need for the sacraments to provide protection from his anger.

3. Christians at Cult Meals - An Alternative Rationale

Even if the Corinthians did not perceive any danger in attending cult meals, did they develop any justification for doing so beyond the fact that these meals were "occasions of good company, good food, and good fun"?[9] Paul's argument contains a hint that perhaps they did. He makes the intriguing comment that ἃ θύουσιν, δαιμονίοις καὶ οὐ θεῷ θύουσιν (10:20). Why does he feel the need to point out that the things sacrificed to idols are not sacrificed to God? That much ought to be

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[8]However, I know of no scholar who has actually argued this. Willis (1985), p.159-161 places great emphasis on the breach in the Corinthians' covenant relationship with God involved in their attending idol feasts; but he presents this as an alternative to the idea that Paul is here attacking 'magical sacramentalism,' and not as a variation on that theme.

[9]Willis (1985), p.63. The relaxed conviviality of cult meals provides a sharp contrast with the high solemnity of initiation into the mystery cults. This pattern may help to explain the gravity with which the Corinthians invest baptism, but the more relaxed attitude they adopt towards the Lord's Supper. Commenting on 1 Cor. 10 and the Corinthians' 'sacramental' security, Nock (1972) Vol. II, p.811 observes that "this idea presumably attached to baptism; the next chapter of the same epistle suggests that, as one might have expected from the pagan evidence, they were not predisposed to regard the communal meals as a *mysterium tremendum* - quite the reverse." Thus, although Paul's words in 10:1-4 imply that he tied baptism and the Lord's Supper together as a particular, identifiable *category* of things, this does necessarily mean that the Corinthians did so. To speak of 'sacraments' in general in Corinth may simply be anachronistic.

obvious. It "introduces a thought which is quite superfluous."[10] Paul's words here look like an allusion to the LXX version of Deut. 32:17, Ἔθυσαν δαιμονίοις, καὶ οὐ Θεῷ.[11] Certainly such an allusion would fit the general context of Paul's argument, since Deuteronomy refers to the Israelites in the desert, but what is its specific point? It still appears out of place in Paul's train of thought since for the Israelites to sacrifice to demons was apostasy, but for the pagans to whom Paul refers here it is only that which is expected. Is this allusion for the sake of allusion?[12]

I would suggest instead that it may have fitted Paul's argument very well. Does Paul say οὐ θεῷ in order to contradict the Corinthians' opinion? Knowing that there is no God but one, did the Corinthians take the plethora of gods in Graeco-Roman religion to be simply various representations of Him? Far from breaking the terms of their covenant with God, do they believe that in taking part in idol feasts they are honouring their own Lord? Are idol feasts to them simply acceptable alternatives to the Lord's Supper, albeit presumably inferior ones? Certainly the notion that one God was the reality behind all the gods is a well substantiated phenomenon at the educated end of the spectrum of Graeco-Roman religious belief.[13] If it was shared by the Corinthians then far from being an action from whose consequences they required magical protection, attending idol feasts might even be considered beneficial.

'Magical sacramentalism' therefore seems a classic example of the over-interpretation of a text. Paul's sense of the dangers inherent in taking liberties in the use of the 'sacraments' has been projected onto the Corinthians, and a reason found to

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[10]Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.216.

[11]1 Cor. 10:20 has a large number of variant readings. However, all those with significant support both contain the problem and permit the allusion.

[12]Both Robertson & Plummer (1911), p.216 and Fee (1987), p.472 n.47 suggest that in 10:20 οὐ θεῷ should be translated 'to a no-god' or 'not to a god' or 'even to one who is no-god.' In support of this they point to Deut. 32:21 where the thought clearly requires that οὐ θεῷ mean 'that which is not God.' However, there the phrase has the preposition ἐπί, thus signalling a different meaning. In Deut. 32:17 'not to God' makes perfect sense.

[13]See MacMullen (1981), pp.88-89. Also Barclay (1992), p.70. It is a notion which Apuleius has Isis express about herself. See *Metamorphoses* XI.5.

explain their apparent flouting of them, when a much simpler explanation lay to hand. The Corinthians did not see these dangers; Paul's universe contained a type of hazard which theirs lacked. Far from being inclined to 'magic', they simply believe that through baptism they have progressed to a higher level of spiritual existence, and see no reason to fear that they might be about to slip back down again. That scholars have been so blind to this possibility may be attributed to present day considerations. It is striking the number of occasions on which it is remarked that the Corinthians believed the sacraments to work *ex opere operato*.[14] Without it being stated openly, Protestant scholars have implicitly identified 'magical sacramentalism' with Roman Catholicism. Further, the hypothesis that the Corinthians were 'magical sacramentalists' has itself performed the function of a magical charm. For if the Corinthians were not 'magical sacramentalists' then Paul cannot here be tempering overly enthusiastic and 'realistic' attitudes towards baptism and the Lord's Supper. 'Magical sacramentalism' has provided modern Christian scholars with an effective talisman to shield them from the uncomfortable fact that Paul held views concerning the sacraments, and indeed the demonic, which they would find distasteful and primitive.[15]

[14]E.g., Käsemann (ET 1964), p.116; Barrett (1971b), p.224; Schrage (1995), p.385.
[15]See Schweitzer (ET 1931), p.22 and Nock (1972) Vol.II, p.808 for warnings against the tendency to project modern ideas about the sacraments back onto Paul.

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